

I HELPED TO BUILD AN ARMY

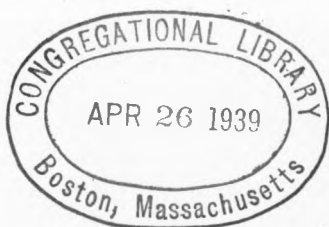
Translated from the Spanish by F. Borkenau and
Eric Mosbacher

José Martín Blázquez

I HELPED TO BUILD AN ARMY

*Civil War Memoirs of a
Spanish Staff Officer*

With an Introduction by
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INTRODUCTION

THERE prevails a general feeling that a disproportion exists between the amount of books written on the Spanish civil war and the amount of real information available about this important event. One of the reasons is that most of the bulky literature on the subject has been written by foreigners who hardly knew the country. Spain is a country unique in almost every respect in the present Western world ; and of all the countries which are engaging international attention at the present time it is, perhaps, the most difficult for a foreigner to understand. It is true that some Spanish works on the civil war have been translated into foreign languages. But they are written, almost invariably, by strong partisans of one side or the other.

The work of my friend, Major José Martín Blázquez, as far as I can see, is unique in the respect that it is the description of the civil war by a Spaniard who, while himself an active participant in the war, writes more for the sake of describing what happened than for the sake of justifying the views and actions of this or that side. Not that Señor Martín Blázquez is 'impartial' in any sense of the word. From the first pages onwards the reader will realise that he has before him the work of a partisan of the moderate wing of the Republican camp, an admirer of Manuel Azaña and Indalecio Prieto, and a man imbued with a ferocious hatred of Fascism, revolutionary Socialism, and Anarchism. The author makes no attempt to

hide his feelings in this respect, and if his testimony were limited to his outbursts of rage against all those whose political opinions differ from his, this book would be a piece of special pleading no more valuable than that of any other propagandist.

But for two reasons Señor Martín's memoirs are something different and something more valuable than such a piece of special pleading. Martín Blázquez, from the beginning of the civil war till March 1937, worked in high positions in the War Ministry of the Republican Government, and his testimony, besides being that of a partisan, is that of an expert on the military problems of the Spanish civil war. And the value of his expert testimony is enhanced by the fact that he *was* an actor on the Spanish scene ; he *is* no longer. Disgusted with many things which he himself will amply explain in the pages which follow, he went to France in the spring of 1937, having decided to lend a hand no longer in the fratricidal struggle. What he presents is therefore less a partisan defence than a neutral retrospect.

The literature of modern war memoirs is bulky enough. But I know of no other case of a high officer having published his war memoirs while the war was still in progress, after detaching himself from the cause he was fighting for. Señor Martín's story is, in the main, the story of the transformation of the revolutionary militia of the first weeks into the regular army which is now fighting for the Republic. The fact that this account is written, not years after the event, but under the immediate impression of hot reality, gives it a directness and a ring of sincerity which the historian so often misses in studying the military history of former wars. The reader will be able to judge for himself of the value of Señor Martín's account as a historical source. The inner history of the new army, the criss-cross of paramount problems of principle and policy with personal rivalries and

antagonisms, is here presented for the first time, and will, I believe, remain the principal historical source for this aspect of the Spanish civil war.

There is more, however. Señor Martín would be no true Spaniard did his account not transform itself under his pen. He has given more than facts. He gives an atmosphere, hardly ever conveyed before, the atmosphere of the Spanish army. I do not mean the new army of the Republic, which he sees from the viewpoint of an organiser at headquarters, but the old Spanish army, the army which to-day is with General Franco. With this army the author served for fifteen years, in barracks and in the War Ministry, in the Moroccan war and in the suppression of the Socialist revolt in Asturias, both under the monarchy and under the Republic. This army he parades before our eyes in a number of vivid sketches. We see many of its leaders, Primo de Rivera, Franco, Mola, Jordana, Aranda, etc., in revealing episodes. We see their officers and men. The result is not the shallow praise and vilification of propaganda, but a living picture.

But the greatest value of Señor Martín's story does not, in my opinion, reside in what he has to tell us about the Spanish army before the war, nor about the formation of the new Republican army during the war. The greatest value of the book is this: Major Martín throws more light than he realises himself upon the period following his withdrawal from the scene. There is a peculiarity about this withdrawal. Major Martín left Spain when he saw the work of the War Ministry entrusted to those politicians of the Socialist Left Wing, the so-called Caballero group, which he so much hates. I do not think that in his account he does more justice to this particular group than to any other he dislikes. But there will be few people to-day, I believe, who will not agree with his final judgment that Caballero and his group presented a particularly

unpleasant mixture of mealy-mouthed dogmatic vociferation with practical incompetence. Yet what Señor Martín did not realise at the time was that the sway of this group of politicians at the War Ministry was only a short incident on their way to disaster. Less than three months after his withdrawal, they eliminated from all public services, and Señor Martín's hero, Indalecio Prieto, and his group, took over the War Ministry, where they remained until they, in turn, were displaced after the disaster in Aragon in March 1938. At that time Señor Martín had already left. His views, however, and his criticisms of the methods previously employed, can be regarded as representative of the outlook of the officer group with whom Indalecio Prieto collaborated during the ten months of his factual leadership of the Spanish Republic. And the present book, therefore, gives a thorough idea of the principles underlying Spanish Republican policy till the Spring of 1938, ending in the Aragon disaster which cut the Republican zone in two.

The superiority of Franco in war material was doubtless one of the decisive reasons for his success in the Aragon battle. But the sudden fall of Prieto after this battle implied an admission that defeat, in this case, was not simply due to the inferiority of the Republican forces, since in modern war the defence always enjoys immense advantages. It also implied that something was wrong in the Republican camp itself. The Left, both in Spain and abroad, will do well not to close its eyes to the fact that, besides German and Italian arms, other factors of a less crudely mechanical character contributed to the Aragon disaster. These factors, it seems to me, can be admirably studied in Señor Martín's book. Let us briefly sum up his ample evidence.

The Spanish Republic, faced with the task of organising a new army, had three alternative policies

from which to choose. In the first place it might have aimed at creating a revolutionary army. This was the policy favoured by Anarchists and revolutionary Socialists. In the second place there was the possibility of creating a totalitarian army, after the model of the present German, Italian, and Russian armies. This was the policy of the Communists. In the third place, there was the possibility of creating a 'normal', non-political army. This was the policy of Prieto's moderate Socialists and Azaña's Liberal Republicans. It is not surprising that it was the last of these three, which would have freed the military from all political interference, which appealed to those officers who remained loyal to the Republic, and among them Major Martín Blázquez.

All three solutions have been tried in turn, and none of them has proved satisfactory.

The first policy failed because the large section of the Spanish masses who were under revolutionary Anarchist influence hated discipline. The Anarchists believed in a Utopia of voluntary co-operation, and it took them a long time to be disillusioned, much too long in view of the rapidity of the effects of German and Italian 'planes and tanks. No Spanish Anarchist could therefore have organised an army in the sense in which Carnot and Trotsky organised armies in the French and Russian revolutions. (The Spanish 'Trotskyists,' incidentally, put shallow revolutionary verbiage before practical achievement, with the assent of their master, who had forgotten all about his previous rôle in history.) A revolutionary army means an army fully efficient as such, but politically controlled by revolutionaries and bent upon executing a revolutionary programme. The widespread contention that it is impossible to make war and revolution at the same time is based on unawareness of the facts. There has never been a revolution without war. If there could not be war and revolution

at the same time, there could never have been a revolution.

But much as revolutionaries may regret it, there seems reason to believe that these revolutionary wars are a thing of the past. There seems to be something in the working-class movement which makes it utterly unfit for revolutionary warfare. Karl Kautsky, the German Socialist, once stated that warfare is one of the weakest spots in the working-class movement, and he was certainly right. There are countries such as America, England, and Germany, where Labour has a sense of discipline ; but in these countries it is non-revolutionary. There are countries such as Spain where the majority of the proletariat is revolutionary ; but there it hates discipline. The two things, revolution and military discipline, are not intrinsically opposed to one another. One has only to recall that the English Puritans during the Civil War almost created the sort of discipline which to-day is regarded as normal in all armies, and that Oliver Cromwell was one of its inventors. Yet what is not incompatible in itself, seems nevertheless to be incompatible within the frame-work of the working-class movement. The Russian case, apparently an exception, only confirms the rule. For it is notorious that Russian Bolshevism, far from being a spontaneous movement of the working-classes, from the very beginning obeyed the iron rule of a group of professional revolutionaries—as many as 90 per cent of whom came from the intelligentsia and had nothing of working-class mentality about them.

Spain differed from many other countries, in that there the workers were ready to fight in the defence of their political existence. Yet the proletarian revolutionaries in Spain failed to create a revolutionary army. This became obvious within a few months. With the siege of Madrid, military leadership, from November 1936 onwards, fell into the hands of the

Communists, who launched a totalitarian scheme instead of a revolutionary one. The basic ideas of Communist military policy were: No revolution during the war; strict discipline, including terrorism within the ranks; strict political control of the army, by a system of political 'commissars,' with the aim of creating an ideology adapted to this policy, an ideology, that is, mainly based on nationalism.

It is with this programme that the new army of the Republic was formed. From a purely military point of view, this policy was much more efficient than that of the previous phase. The Communists owed a substantial increase of numbers and prestige to these methods. Yet in the end they failed, and that at the very moment when they seemed to have won. For many months they had pushed the Anarchists and the revolutionary Socialists back, until terrorism was unleashed against the Anarchists after the Barcelona rising of May 1937, and until Caballero had fallen from the Premiership. But at that very moment their former allies, Liberals and moderate Socialists, disgusted with their GPU methods and frightened by their claims for absolute political domination, turned against them. The corps of political commissars with the troops, the stronghold of Communist political influence, was dissolved. If the Anarchist period of undisciplined revolutionism ended because of the imminence of military disaster, the Communist period ended because of the resistance of the old political parties, and the Republican officers' corps and civil service, to the totalitarian domination of a party directed from abroad. At first, the Communist Party had been hailed by very large numbers because it brought efficiency to the anti-Fascist war. But when these numbers, especially the leading personnel of the Republican camp, realised that this efficiency involved the extinction of all liberty and the notorious methods of the GPU, they turned against it.

The man who quite inconspicuously carried through the change was Indalecio Prieto, in his capacity of Minister of all the armed forces.

Now, from about July 1937 onwards, the position in Republican Spain was as near that which had obtained before the outbreak of civil war as could possibly be. All revolutionary aims, and all totalitarian aims, had been thwarted and the Republican camp presented the picture, familiar in Spanish politics, of a rule of the army and of the civil service, with a variety of political parties bickering among themselves and attempting to influence the real rulers of the State. But a new spirit had been infused into this tottering form of government by the desire of broad masses to defeat Franco. That such a system should be enthusiastically welcomed by Republican officers such as Major Martín is only natural. In fact, Prieto was through and through the man of the Republican generals.

Spain is a country of interminable delays. Nine months passed before this third phase of Republican government in civil war was put to the test. All through the summer of 1937 Franco was occupied with the conquest of the North, and the defeat of the Republicans in that sector could not in fairness be regarded as a test of the new military régime. Then his plans were upset by the Republican surprise attack on Teruel, which led to temporary success and proved that the Republican army, during the eighteen months of its existence, had at least acquired tactical skill and manœuvring capacity. That the Republicans eventually lost Teruel again cannot be held against them. For Franco possessed a very considerable superiority in armaments, and for that reason was bound to reconquer some small stretch of territory if he chose to waste an unlimited amount of men and material to do so. Teruel, in short, was no decisive test of Prieto's new—but, in fact, old-style—military régime.

But then came the real test, with the March offensive of the Franco army in Aragon. The offensive was foreseen, and Franco ought not to have enjoyed the advantages of surprise which, in fact, he did enjoy. The tremendous superiority of defence over attack ought to have played into the hands of the Republicans. Moreover, Franco was deficient in one of the essentials of a modern offensive—man-power. Nevertheless, the Republican lines, consisting, not of picked troops as at Teruel, but of average regiments, broke helplessly under the first attack and then started a fortnight's inglorious run towards the coast. When, in the end, the fugitives were stopped, it was too late and the Republican zone was cut in two.

The new Republican army, at a decisive moment, had not stood the test. Of course Franco's armaments in Aragon were incomparably more powerful than those he had had in August and September 1936, when he drove the raw militia before him towards Toledo and Madrid. Moreover the Republicans, too, had better arms now, and better training and organisation. On the whole, the disaster of the Ebro valley, in March 1938, repeated the main features of the disasters in the Tagus valley in the Summer of 1936.

The immediate result within the Republican camp was a new reversal of military and general policy. Prieto had to resign. The Anarchists were readmitted to the Government. The Communists, though losing one seat in the Cabinet, regained importance in the army. And some of Prieto's closest military collaborators were arrested on very serious charges. The third attempt at a consistent military policy had failed. It was replaced, not so much by an alternative scheme, as by a mixture of and compromise between all the solutions previously attempted.

If Franco did not carry his victorious troops straight into Barcelona, Valencia, and Madrid, two factors, besides those lying in the international sphere, may

be held responsible. The primary reason of the Republican success in restoring the broken front was Franco's own strategical mistakes. The experience of the Great War shows that no break-through at any point leads in itself to final strategical success. The power of modern defensive arms is such that a sufficient massing of them in one sector is almost always able to stop even the most successful advance. But if the gap in one place is filled, this provides opportunities for attack in other, sometimes widely distant, sectors, until the defence is destroyed by a series of successive blows. This was the method of the Allied armies in France in the Autumn of 1918. General Franco, however, chose to hammer continually at the same points, and thus only stiffened the Republican defence and exhausted his own troops. When, after many months, he changed his tactics and attacked at a distant sector, —in Estremadura—his offensive had completely spent its force and it was easy for the Republicans, who occupied the inner lines, to transfer forces and ward off the new danger.

Franco's mistakes coincided with the unleashing of a primitive, and even primeval force in the Republican camp which more than once has proved decisive in Spanish affairs. The Battle of the Ebro, in March 1938, had been an ordinary battle in the open field, far from any urban centre. In this battle, in spite of eighteen months' training in discipline, the Republican troops had run ingloriously. But after the defeat, the war approached the centres of the mass movement : Catalonia, where fervent nationalism and fanatical revolutionism merge, and Valencia, with its big population of dock workers. As usual, the Spaniards started fighting seriously when their homes were immediately menaced. On the brink of the thickly populated districts of Catalonia, Franco was stopped outright. And in his advance farther south he found progress more difficult with every step bringing him nearer Valencia,

until, at the end of July, the Republican counter-stroke at Gandesa, across the Ebro, brought his offensive for the time being completely to an end.

In other words, Franco's offensive in 1938 was stopped by forces of essentially the same character as those which saved Madrid in 1936—which defeated Napoleon a century before, by the decision of the people to defend their immediate homes. Neither Catalans nor Valencians are, in themselves, very good fighters. 'In Valencia even the men are women,' says a Castilian proverb. This proverb was given the lie in July, after having been borne out by the events of March. The difference was one between an ordinary military battle in the field and the defence of one's own home. All attempts to go beyond this stage—to form a normal regular army—have met with very limited success. But the basic forces of popular resistance to the rising are intact, in spite of two years of war, starvation, and bombings. So are the essential moral forces of Spanish life. They are to-day the same as they were under Napoleon. This short survey gives the measure of the ideas of young officers imbued with the ideas of the West about the formation of a modern army. It is perfectly true that, without training in the use of modern arms and without the introduction of discipline, the Spanish Republican army would have been lost. But it is equally true that this training did not solve the problem, and that in the last resort the Spanish Republic to-day resists thanks to forces which are not rooted at all in our technical age.

Thus history proved the ideas of Prieto—the ideas advocated by Major Martín Blázquez—to have been half a success and half a failure ; they succeeded when the defence of the immediate homes of the popular movement was in question ; they failed to create an army capable of holding its own in the open field. Why this incapacity of the Spanish Republicans to go

beyond the stage of strict and narrow defence? That, in my opinion, is the crucial question of the Spanish civil war. It is not difficult to understand why the Republicans cannot undertake large-scale offensives. For this Franco's superiority in armaments provides ample explanation. But why should they have been unable to resist in the open field? Why, in other words, was it impossible to sever military operations completely from the urban centres of the political movement? Why did Prieto and his partisans, such as Major Martín Blázquez, fail in their attempts to create an ordinary, 'normal' army, more or less adaptable to any conditions of service?

In my opinion Major Blázquez' study provides an indirect answer to this central problem of the Spanish civil war. For his account is a most valuable document of the views of the officers who created the new Republican army. These views, as is patent in every page of his book, are characterised by one outstanding feature: refusal to realise that a civil war is something different from an ordinary war. Yet the reason for this difference and for its overwhelming importance is quite simple. A normal war cannot be conducted, any more than a civil war, without the passionate readiness of the men in the lines and in the rear to sacrifice their lives. In normal war, this condition is usually fulfilled because patriotism, the natural allegiance of a man to his country, is one of the most powerful passions of the human soul. What, however, becomes of 'normal' war if patriotism is lacking can be studied in the history of such ventures as Austria's ignominious defeats during the Great War. But in the case of civil war, no such ready-made passions uniting the whole people are available for the military organiser, and this makes his task much more difficult. It is serious if he fails altogether to understand the problem, as was the case with the partisans of a 'normal' 'national' army in the middle of the

civil war in Spain. It is true, and it is fortunate for the Spanish Republic, that some elements of a national war exist in the Spanish civil war. In the case of the Basques and of the Catalans, an intense regionalism took the place of normal patriotism. But if it more or less united these regions in one common feeling, it made them unwilling to defend Republican Spain outside the borders of their own regions, and thus constituted one of the chief reasons for many defeats.

As for the rest of Republican Spain, with Russian influence gradually receding since the Summer of 1937, and Italian intervention becoming more important in the Franco camp, the war assumed some aspects of a war of national defence. But it never was, and never will be, simply such a national war.

What forces can be called on to make up for the deficiencies of patriotism in a civil war? Obviously those very forces which brought civil war about, forces striving for a change of the existing social order. And here we touch the root of the tragedy of the Spanish Republic. For the attempt to transform revolutionary impulses so as to make them useful for the creation of an army of the Cromwell or Carnot type has failed in Spain, and this failure struck the whole Left movement in Spain with sterility. For this failure, in my view, all groups and factors of Spanish political life are equally responsible.

First of all, as I have said already, the forces of the revolutionary mass movement, in the first place the Anarchists, appeared to the officers of the new army as forces of military disintegration, and that with very good reason. An army built on Anarchist principles would be nonsense. Thus, in order to build up an efficient army, Anarchism had to be defeated politically. But Anarchism was the strongest, most self-sacrificing, most enthusiastic force in the mass movement. By destroying its political influence, the forces standing for the creation of a Republican army

destroyed the main psychological basis upon which a Cromwellian New Model army might have been built. It is the tragedy of the Spanish revolution that its most revolutionary forces, in contrast to the English Independents, the French Jacobins, and the Russian Bolsheviks, were forces of indiscipline. The political defeat of these forces did not involve the destruction of the will of the Spanish masses to defend themselves against the aggressor, but it did destroy that enthusiasm for a political crusade without which no civil war has ever been won.

But this, naturally, was not simply due to an unhappy coincidence. It was a symptom of the weakness of the constructive forces among the Spanish Left. On the one hand there were people willing to destroy—the Anarchists—but refusing to construct anything, in the millennarian belief that once the world was purged of all evil, the good life would come by itself. On the other hand, there were people willing to build up a machinery of defence—young officers, the Communists, the Prieto group—but unwilling to do more than organise an ordinary army.

In Spain, Anarchism is not a phenomenon limited to the Anarchists. At bottom, the party of 'authority' and 'organisation' was as much lacking in a constructive political programme as the Anarchists themselves. In order to realise the extent of this unpolitical attitude of the group which created the new army, one need only recall Major Martín Blázquez' statement that the poverty of the Spanish peasant is due to the poverty of the Spanish soil and not to the inadequacy of the Spanish agrarian régime. As if the same soil, under the rule of the Moors, had not maintained a population much richer and more numerous!

Political negativism, absolute lack of constructive political aims—that is the charge which must be brought against every section of the Spanish Left—and incidentally against every section of the Spanish

Right. Let us consider this fact, which was the ultimate cause of the Spanish tragedy and, in particular, of the failure to build up a 'normal' army, in some more detail.

Spanish industry is concentrated in Catalonia and in the Basque country. The latter has always been—by Spanish standards—a model of social peace; the former, a hotbed of social revolution. Yet the structure of Catalan industry is essentially healthy, in the sense in which the structure of the Lancashire textile industry was healthy in the mid-Victorian era: a class of employers largely risen from the ranks; a rich variety of sizes and forms of enterprise; a correspondingly rich gradation of the social hierarchy from very rich *entrepreneurs* through small owners to skilled and unskilled workers; a more or less safe home market; a keen sense of saving and capital investment, a happy balance of caution and enterprise, and a very equitable distribution of wealth over a large part of the urban population. The idea of social revolution in industry under such conditions is preposterous. Yet Barcelona was a hotbed of revolutionism, owing to many factors which we cannot here analyse in detail but which all lead back, not to any basic maladjustment of industry, but to the hopeless state of the Spanish countryside. For if Spanish industry needs no revolution whatsoever, Spanish agriculture cannot possibly continue as it is.

Over about two-thirds of Spain agriculture is controlled by big absentee landowners, who spend all their revenue and do nothing to improve their desiccated fields; making enormous earnings out of labour paid at starvation level; reacting to every difficulty, not by introducing improved methods of cultivation, but by letting more land lie fallow, which implies the additional advantage of increasing unemployment and lowering wages. Eighty per cent of the Spanish population live, directly or indirectly, on

agriculture. By far the greater part of them are permanently impoverished by these conditions. There is no hope of Spain's rising from her present distress, there is no hope of an end of revolutionary upheavals, as long as these conditions last.

Strange as such a statement may seem, the conditions of Spanish industry tend towards the formation of a conservative community of employers and employed of the mid-Victorian type. In the Basque country, they actually led to the formation of such a community. In Catalonia, they would lead to the same, were the sting taken out of the problems of Catalan agriculture and of Catalan regionalism. The problem of Spain, economic, social, and political, is to match this essentially healthy industrial community with a similarly healthy agricultural community ; in other words, to create a satisfied peasantry. If that were achieved, Spain would certainly become a country as mildly progressive and as essentially conservative as France has been ever since the French Revolution. If it is not achieved, Spain will remain a hotbed of revolution. Agrarian reform may be carried out by the Right or by the Left. Whoever carries it out will deserve and obtain the age-long allegiance of the Spanish people. But whatsoever régime attempts to rule without carrying it out will remain on feet of clay.

Unfortunately nobody in Spain is willing to tackle the issue, though everybody talks about it. Leaving aside the Left-Wing Socialists of Caballero, with their empty verbiage, there are on the one hand Anarchists who aim at a wholesale social revolution, meaningless and unachievable under Spanish conditions ; on the other hand, moderate Republicans of the type of Señor Martín Blázquez, who deny even the possibility of serious agrarian reform.

In the Franco camp, the dominant force consists of the rich landowners themselves, who, rather than

ascribe the distress of the Spanish peasantry to their own shortcomings, attribute it to the fact that God made the soil of Spain arid. There are also young Falangists, quite sufficiently awake to the problem and quite willing to do something—but they are irretrievably linked to their allies, the big landowning aristocracy. Outside Catalonia the peasant remains an inarticulate beast of burden, and though he is undoubtedly the central figure of Spanish life, he has not even a political party of his own.

It is admitted that agrarian reform in Spain is an immensely complex problem, infinitely more complex than it was in Russia or France, and this complexity is an easy excuse for all those who want to leave things as they are. It is, moreover, particularly unhappy that a problem of such complexity should confront a nation such as the Spaniards, whose incapacity in matters of organisation is proverbial.

It must be said, on the other hand, that no general formula can provide an adequate solution: neither 'the land to the peasants,' because there are large stretches of land unfit for small-size farming; nor 'collectivisation,' because in certain provinces there exists a strong, property-minded peasantry. Yet the problem must be solved. And those who, in Spain and abroad, invoke their horror of social revolution in order to forestall a moderate agrarian reform are as much breeders of the most terrible social outbreaks as the Anarchists themselves.

Let us stop at this point. I hope to have made it clear that, owing to the lack of a constructive and intelligible social programme on both sides, the great majority of the Spanish people really do not and cannot know what they are fighting for. They will defend their towns and villages against immediate aggression. They will defend their local and regional independence. They hate foreign intrusion. But most of all they wish for an end of the war.

The Independents of Cromwell, the Jacobins of Robespierre and Carnot, the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, were fanatical minorities of crusaders, who drew the majority of their people with them by means of an intelligible social programme. In Spain, the crusaders have been caught in shallow revolutionary verbiage, and the masses have been left behind, in bewilderment, distress, and despair, ready to defend their homes, not more. The attempt of the Communists, a force of foreign origin, to introduce totalitarian methods instead, helped to introduce discipline and organisation, but carries its full share of responsibility for the failure to evolve a constructive political programme. There are the masses, not knowing what they are fighting for, the revolutionary extremists to whom they do not listen, the Communist totalitarians, who are strangers to them, and the moderates and officers who want a 'normal' army. All these groups are divided from one another by an abyss: just as, in the other camp, an abyss divides the Italians from the Spaniards, and the generals and magnates from the Falangists. It is not surprising that, under such conditions, Franco has to rely on foreigners, while in the Republican camp one programme of army organisation is attempted and relinquished after another.

To the understanding of this tragedy, Señor Martín Blázquez' book contributes more than any other eyewitness account I know. It contributes to it directly by the story he tells about the formation of the New Model army of the Republic; and indirectly, by the revelation of the views of the men who undertook this task.

F. BORKENAU.

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TO JUANITO B. GONZALES

YOUR elder brother and I were inseparables from childhood. Our friendship dated from the age of four. When I went to your house and rang the bell your mother would call out : " Hurry up, son, here's your sweetheart ! " But it wasn't your mother but mine who christened us ' sweethearts.' In later years, when he came to my house, my own sons used to call out : " Papa, here's your sweetheart ! " and jump into his arms.

When I became a cadet and wore a sword, I would fetch him on Sundays and we would go for walks in the rocky hills of Avila, and discuss the latest book we had surreptitiously extracted from your father's magnificent library. We always took you with us. You would play with my sword and my spurs. Your grace and beauty were striking even at the age of five. Even then your brother and I looked upon you as a promising son rather than as a younger brother.

At thirty your brother and I were far older than our years. The knowledge that we had nothing behind us but bad schools, bad teachers and bad books oppressed us. Our intellectual efforts had been a fiasco. But you, at eighteen, after being the most brilliant pupil of the brilliant Escuela, were the apple of your professors' eye at the university. You were our great hope ; each day you seemed to hold out some new promise. Such was our humility and respect for you that we would carefully measure our words in your presence, fearing to disgrace ourselves before you by exposing the

wretchedness of our self-education or being anxious that the touching affection with which you always treated us should not sow the seeds of any false ideas in your young mind.

A few days before the military insurrection you did us an honour that touched us deeply. Sheltered from the gathering storm in your father's library, you read us the thesis that was to be the culmination of your university career. It was called 'Erasmus and Spain.' At the age of twenty you were already ripe with achievement.

'In the time of Erasmus,' you wrote, 'Spain was struggling to remain herself. . . . Her soil was the most propitious for the sowing of the seeds of humanism, and it was therefore in Spain that Erasmus found most friends and most appreciation. . . . All Spain said : He who speaks ill of Erasmus is either a donkey or a monk. . . . At court, in the towns, in the churches, in the monasteries, even in the taverns and upon the high-roads, there was hardly a man who did not carry with him Erasmus's Encheiridion. . . . Spain fell, and the spirit of Spanish humanism took fright and went into hiding. . . . Spaniards, fighting for a foreign prince, won wars in Flanders, in France, in Italy, throughout the world ; those wars drained Spain of her life-blood. . . . To fight those wars, Cæsar needed unity of conscience and, in order to achieve it, stamped out humanism, which had appeared to be the very substance of the soul of Spain.'

How often, since this criminal war began, Juanito, have I recalled the words you spoke that day : " Yes, there must be struggle, but struggle against ignorance, folly and our traditional conceit. . . . No disease is more contagious than the evil influence of hatred. . . . As in the days before the Reformation, the salvation of Europe depends upon her capacity to unite Socrates and Jesus, ethics and religion. . . . Like Don Quixote after his battle with the goat-herds, Spain returned from her

superfluous European wars with broken ribs. . . . There must be no more crusades, crusades must be forgotten. . . . Neither Rome nor Moscow must be the watchword of us Spaniards."

Poor Juanito ! Poor youth of Spain ! Who fired the shot that killed you, Juanito ? Was it one of your friends who, against his will, had to fight in Franco's ranks in order to save his father, perhaps a cultured inhabitant of Burgos, Valladolid or Seville, from having to face a Falangist firing-squad ?

They told me that your body, together with those of thousands of other young men, was recovered and buried after the battle of Brunete, a battle which both sides called ' glorious ' over the wireless.

Castile wept for the death of Don Juan, son of the Catholic Kings, Heir-Apparent of Spain, because his death inevitably brought Charles V, a German, to the throne. Thus every day do I weep for you, Juanito, seeing how criminal stupidity makes itself master of Spain and of mankind.

CHAPTER ONE

October 1934

NO Spaniard will ever be able to forget the night of 4 October 1934. Three members of the reactionary CEDA had joined the Government of the Republic, and in reply the Socialists, faithful to their previous declarations, had unleashed the revolution. The Catalan Government had risen against the central Government of Madrid for the same reason.

It was impossible to sleep. I had switched off the wireless, so as not to hear the anguished words of the announcer at Barcelona. I did not want to listen. I knew by heart, beforehand, all that was going to happen all over Spain ; complete failure of the revolution, followed by persecutions, executions, and the rest. Subsequent events proved that I was only too well justified in spending all that night with memories of Avila, of my youth.

I was surprised to discover that Avila was not dead, nor were Segovia, Salamanca, and Burgos, and that in reality these monastic towns, like the priest Santa Cruz,¹ had only tucked up their cassocks.

One of the things on which my mind dwelt particularly was an event in the life of the little town in which I was born. It happened when I was a boy, during the year I spent with my uncle Agostin, the

¹ Santa Cruz, a fanatical priest, was one of the most ruthless leaders of the first Carlist rising (1837-44) and did many blood-thirsty deeds in his priestly habit.

parish priest of San Juan, who taught Latin for forty years at the episcopal seminary at Avila.

Avila, with her twelve thousand inhabitants and her hundred-odd churches and monasteries, was still a mediæval town. Her mentality and her customs had remained practically unchanged. Grass grew in the streets and was annually parched by the summer sun. Watches were not objects of prime necessity, for one always knew the time from the ringing of the church bells. "What is the time, if you please?" "But did you not hear the small bell of the cathedral ringing? It is between nine o'clock and a quarter past, but nearer nine, I think, because it hasn't stopped ringing long." Or: "It's half-past six. Didn't you hear the bell of San Vicente ringing for vespers?"

At night the place was so quiet and still that a pedestrian's footsteps could be heard over half the town. At intervals you heard the voices of the watchmen. "*Ave Maria purissima*, it is half-past twelve and snowing."

Here, then, His Grace the Bishop presiding, there took place the public competitive disputations for the office of dean of the cathedral, the second highest ecclesiastical office in the whole province—14,000 *reales*¹ a year plus perquisites. The disputations were accordingly keenly contested, and lasted many days. Public opinion was passionately divided. Most people were afraid that the coveted office would go to a priest from Valladolid whom the Bishop was rumoured to support. All day long I heard of nothing but of the problems put to the competitors, which were the sole subject of conversation at the café, at the club, and at the barber's.

One afternoon, when my uncle was out, two cousins of mine arrived. They were my elders by six or seven years, and both of them were about to be ordained. One of them had a reputation for outstanding ability, and people said he would certainly

¹ About £100 in pre-War currency.

become a bishop. Our aunt, who was our uncle's housekeeper, made us some magnificent chocolate, both because she was kind by nature and because she had a great respect for her nephew's talents. We spent the afternoon smoking my uncle's cigars, and the conversation naturally turned to the disputations.

The problem at that morning's encounter had been taken from the Instructions drawn up for the Holy Inquisition by the Reverend Brother Tomás de Torquemada. All the candidates but two had already been eliminated, and there remained only the priest from Valladolid and another from the province of Avila who was greatly esteemed for his knowledge and erudition. "A real archive rat," his colleagues called him. However, his rival from Valladolid had not been wasting his time either. The controversy between the two had started at Article 12 of the Instructions, and they had begun to split the usual theological hairs.

'If, in the course of an investigation,' says this Article, 'the witnesses have been heard and the defendant has given evidence and pleaded guilty ; if, furthermore, he desires formally to abjure his errors and claims to be admitted to reconciliation, the inquisitors will grant such request by condemning him to perpetual prison. They will take a different course if his display of contrition or any other circumstances give the inquisitors the impression that his conversion is only simulated ; in this last case, they must declare him an impenitent heretic and abandon him to the secular arm ; the decision is left to the conscience of the inquisitors.'

It appeared that our local candidate had maintained that in drafting this Article, Torquemada, as in the case of all the other Instructions, had followed the *Directorium* of Eymerich. The priest from Valladolid, however, had argued that Torquemada had had no need to have recourse to a foreign authority for the drafting of his Instructions, because they were, had

been, and would always remain, magnificent deductions from transcendent truths known to all our glorious theologians ; Spain fortunately abounded in them.

In spite of much argument, my cousins were convinced at heart that the priest from Valladolid had gained so much ground that morning that the disputations which were still to come had lost all interest.

I was fifteen then, and the Great War was at its height, and for want of any other form of entertainment I made out that I very much wanted to learn that attractive Article 12 by heart. I made my cousins repeat it to me several times and, as I could not remember the Latin, made them give it to me in Spanish, until in the end I learned it. But I was filled with an enormous curiosity about the meaning of that queer term, the 'secular arm.' Finally my curiosity got the better of my anxiety not to appear ignorant, so I asked them. The less learned of my two cousins replied. Being handed over to the secular arm was the ecclesiastical equivalent of being burned alive.

"Heavens !" I exclaimed. "But that's no joke, is it ?"

Afterwards I was to discover that I had committed a serious indiscretion, because, as a result of this outburst, the more learned of my two cousins upset my mother severely by telling her that he had detected a slight air of frivolity in my attitude to sacred theological matters. He said she ought to keep a careful eye on me, because perhaps I had got into bad company already, and was consorting with people influenced by Jewish ideas ; even in Avila there were persons without faith who used every opportunity to lead the faithful astray.

Over and over again, during that night of October 4, my mind dwelt on my childhood friends. These were practically all the boys of the town.

When we planned Sunday expeditions to go hunting lizards or birds, or to go swimming, fishing or whatever it might be, we always arranged to meet after Mass. "All right then, at seven o'clock, after the six-thirty Mass at San Pedro," or "At San Vicente after the eight o'clock Mass," and the like.

My best friend was a boy whose father was said actually to possess the works of Voltaire. Before each one of these expeditions, while we waited at the church door for the gang to gather, my friend always insisted on our conducting a little inquiry. One by one, as the other boys came out of church, we would ask them what they had done during Mass. The answers were always the same :

"Why, nothing. I just wait till it's over."

"But don't you pray? Don't you try to talk directly to God? Don't you follow the reading of the Gospel?"

"No. I do what all the others do. I kneel when they kneel, and get up when they get up."

"But don't you pray?"

"No. I just do the same as all the others."

I do not remember a single boy to whom religion really meant anything. They all went to Mass because mother sent them.

Occasionally we would find a boy who seemed particularly religious and went frequently to Holy Communion with his mother before school. "Do you believe in God?" we would ask him. "Of course, you idiot. I'm a Catholic, aren't I?" "Yes, but when do you pray? Do you ever pray when you are all alone?"

I do not remember a single boy who satisfied us that he ever prayed in solitude, as Catholics of other nations, less famous for their Catholicism than Spain, are often impelled to do.

During the early days of the Republic I paid several short visits to Avila, and had many talks with the local dignitaries of the Catholic Party of Popular Action (CEDA), who nearly all belonged to my generation.

Our conversations were always stamped with the frankness which is so characteristic of Old Castile. If your interlocutor is leaving by train the same night and is not directly involved in your daily life, you give particularly free rein to it. Such was the case with me.

"You still go to Mass on Sundays and listen to sermons from time to time," I used to tell them, "but in spite of the 'terrible persecutions' of the Church by the Republic, which led to all the priests and all the friars joining in to form your marvellous People's Party, do you still never pray in solitude? Yet you spend all your time with priests and friars. When *do* you pray? I shall not ask you to adapt your political ideas to the Gospel of Christ, for what would become of the tactical requirements of your party then? They would go to pieces. But tell me one thing. When do you pray?"

"Oh, sometimes I do. When I come home and find my wife saying the rosary with the children and the maids, I sit down and join them. And then, sometimes, I have to box the ears of one or other of the boys, if he is absent-minded and doesn't say his prayers properly."

When I took my leave, I always used to make them the same playful speech:

"I always remember you in my prayers," I said. "I pray for you a great deal, and for the priests and friars who help you in your incessant plotting against the Republic. I always pray for the same miracle, which only God could accomplish; that is, your conversion to Christianity, real Christianity. Only a miracle could accomplish that. Missionaries might

be sent to Spain to try to convert the Catholic Spaniards to Christianity, but I am afraid that would not work. If the Spanish Church converted you to real Christianity instead of arming you in order to enforce her secular policy and make life comfortable for yourselves, it would be the greatest miracle of all times."

All the memories which crowded into my mind during that tragic night were somehow bound up with the events of the moment. For the revolution had no greater enemy than the Church, which, as her spokesman, Señor Gil Robles had said, 'had provoked it in order to crush it.' The armed forces cursed the necessity of using their arms, and the working masses had no real desire for a revolution. What they wanted was less a revolution than an energetic protest against the immorality and the hypocrisy of the reactionaries.

The whole Spanish people still vividly remembered the innumerable things that had happened in the country-side under the Lerroux Government, which was based on Catholic support. At Azuaga, for instance, an agreement had been made concerning the labourers' food and wages, but the contract had said nothing about water. The employer, the most devout Catholic in the village, had had the well on his estate filled up, so that it was impossible for the harvesters to have a drink of water while at work in the boiling sun. He had done this at the instigation of the priest. Then there were the measures taken by the proprietors of the olive groves of Estremadura and Andalusia, the inspiration for which had again come from Catholic CEDA circles. Women were forbidden to enter the olive groves by night to gather the olives which had fallen from the trees, as they had done for centuries. To make the ban effective pigs were let loose in the groves, so that no olives remained to be collected.

“Do you like the Republic?” the people were asked. “Well, then, eat it or starve to death!”

Morning approached and sleep was still impossible, and I set myself to pondering on the tragic paradox of Spain, where every individual is full of kindness, yet the country is full of abominable cruelty, most of which, throughout the ages, has been instigated by the Church.

Suddenly it dawned on me that the explanation of the ferocity with which the Spanish Church imposed her doctrine was that the latter was no more than a spiritual weapon for the protection of her secular interests and the enforcement of her policies and her authority.

I visualised the Church rather like a cheat at cards, who generally wins, but if he is found out or luck turns against him, boils over with ungovernable fury.

Morning came, and it was time to go to the office. I had been working for four days at the Ministry of War. I had to walk, although it was a long way, because of the strike.

The department of which I was a member consisted of eight or nine captains, four or five lieutenants and two soldier assistants, in addition to the chief. There was plenty of work. There was enough to occupy three typists, two clerks, and the chief. There were fifteen of us officers, but we were worked to death because we couldn't type and were used to life in barracks, where, when we wanted to dictate a letter, we simply rang for a soldier-typist. Our department did more work than most of the others. That gives a clue to how work was found for

the thousands of surplus officers in the Spanish Army.

I believed all my colleagues to be my friends. Owing to my connections with the politicians of the Republic I had been able to render services to some of them. I was therefore painfully surprised that morning, when, as a result of the outbreak, they all started insulting me for the great crime of being a Republican. One bearded clerk, who had always treated me with great respect because I had recommended his daughter for a teaching post, and had never ceased his expressions of gratitude, now burst out at me as follows :

"How disgraceful!" he exclaimed. "How disgraceful to wear uniform and yet be a Republican! Fortunately there are not many of you, but you ought to have your epaulets torn off and be shot like a dog!"

Captain Valenciano, though he was a reactionary of the deepest dye, took pity on me and led me into another room, where he volunteered to type to my dictation. I shall always be grateful to him for this. I spent the morning with him, and he gave me the latest news.

"They had to send for Franco, who was in the Balearics, to take command of the operations. The revolution seems to be particularly violent in Asturias," and so on and so forth.

"Did you hear many shots last night at the Hippodrome and in your neighbourhood?" he asked me.

"I certainly did. I heard shooting all night long. It seems to have been worst in my neighbourhood."

A few minutes before the lunch-bell rang I was sent for by the head of the department. I was so astonished that the most absurd ideas entered my head. Did this mean arrest or deportation or what? But the chief only told me that I was drafted to Asturias and was to go there as soon as communications were restored.

He gave me my military pass and told me that I was released from service at the Ministry and need not return to the office. I had been so grossly insulted that morning that the prospect of leaving for Asturias was a great relief.

Nevertheless I had to remain in Madrid for a few days longer, until communications with Asturias were restored. I stayed at home, except one night, when the fancy took me to go to Las Cibeles.¹ It was late, and I waited for a tram. One soon came, driven by an infantry captain in uniform, whom I knew. He did not see me. He was one of the numerous idlers who volunteered to take the places of the striking workers, and he was obviously very proud of what he was doing. I stayed on the back platform till we reached the Plaza de Colón. There the tram was boarded by a group of Civil Guards,² who pushed all the passengers inside and set up a machine-gun on the platform. This kind of 'protection' made us all a little nervous, because, if the Civil Guards were attacked, we would suffer the consequences.

Fortunately the journey continued without incident. It was pitch-dark, for all the lights were out along the Paseo de la Castellana, but I was able once again to satisfy myself that there were more courting couples than benches in Madrid. Every bench along the Paseo was occupied, and many of the trees as well. I was amused to see how advantage was being taken of the darkness and emptiness of the Paseo. The lovers in Madrid can now kiss in peace, I said to myself.

¹ One of the central squares of Madrid, with the War Ministry, the central post office, and the Bank of Spain at the same corner.

² The Civil Guards are a special picked police force, trained for dealing with all sorts of disorder and therefore much hated by all sections of the revolutionary movement.

But one elegantly dressed gentleman was much upset by this. The lights of the tram suddenly illuminated a couple exchanging a kiss which would have made Greta Garbo blush. "How disgraceful!" the elegantly dressed gentleman angrily exclaimed. "This is what we owe to the Republic! This must be stopped! It's absolutely intolerable!" He seemed to expect the Civil Guards to stop the tram and arrest the guilty couple. But the sergeant, to my great satisfaction, merely remarked: "Leave the poor devils alone. Let them enjoy themselves while they've got the chance. Why be envious? They're not doing anybody any harm!"

CHAPTER TWO

In Asturias

ON October 16 I took the night-train from Madrid to Santander. It was full of officers bound, like me, for Asturias. I was glad I did not know any of them. In their conversation they systematically derided everything I used to and still do value, but as they knew nothing of my views I listened and did not interrupt. They all deplored the fact that Azafía was still in prison in Barcelona. In their opinion he should have been shot out of hand, without the formality of a court martial. "As it is," one of them said, "he will be free in less than a year, and justice will be cheated again. They ought to have fired a couple of bullets into him. That's all he deserves, and a good many of his friends, too. All this red tape is absurd!"

Among the company was one captain who had ample opportunity of displaying his almost incredible stupidity during the interminable journey. "But where are the Rabasaires?"¹ he kept asking in a loud voice whenever there was a lull in the conversation, and just as I was thankfully dozing off to sleep.

He had previously described in barrack-room language the disappointment felt by the Foreign

¹ 'Rabasaires'—Catalan word for tenant-farmers. Politically the word indicates the union of tenant-farmers in Catalonia, chief mainstay of the moderate wing of the Catalan Nationalists, and at that time the mainstay of the Catalan regional government in its revolt against Madrid.

Legionaries when they landed in Barcelona and failed to find their enemy, the Rabasaires, who seemed to have vanished into thin air. On board they had sung ferocious war-songs, describing how they would exterminate those rebellious peasants, whom they believed to be the pillar of the Generalidad.¹ Once in Barcelona they had gone about the streets, the cafés and the taverns shouting : " But where are the Rabasaires ? "

This captain exasperated me. He seemed mentally deficient, with his interminable : " But where are the Rabasaires ? "

At Santander we all went straight to the headquarters of the military commandant. Its habitual tranquillity had departed. Cars kept driving up and driving away. The atmosphere was feverish. Officers of all ranks were coming and going. Every time one of them passed through the ante-room where we had to wait before seeing the commandant somebody would stop him and say : " Hullo ! don't you remember me, old man ? How are you ? Where are you dashing off to like this ? "

" Hullo ! and how are you ? So you're going to Asturias ? Excuse me, I'll see you later. I'm in a great hurry. I've got to requisition some wagon-loads of flour for the Asturias army." All of them were ' requisitioning ' something ; sausages, sardines, bacon, salt-cod, coffee, etc. One heard nothing but the word ' requisition.'

I exchanged a few words with an old friend of mine, who was enthusiastic about the efficiency with which the military operations were being conducted.

" You know that Franco is in charge of everything," he said. " We have sent the troops, and now our job is keeping them supplied. We are in constant touch

¹ The Catalan regional government. The Foreign Legion shared this view about the Rabasaires with the Catalan Government. But, to everybody's surprise, they did not turn up and left the Generalidad in the lurch.

with Madrid. We have sent several food convoys, and we have requisitioned all the available supplies in the province of Santander."

Eventually we were shown into the commandant's room. He took the opportunity of giving us news from Asturias. Everything was as good as over, and there was no more resistance. Exemplary measures had been taken, and that had been the end. It had been proved once more that as soon as our glorious Legionaries and Moorish battalions appeared the revolutionaries ran for their lives. Nothing remained to be done except to carry out a few punitive operations.

He added that he had requisitioned a bus to take us to Gijón, but as railway services had been resumed he suggested we had better lunch and take the two o'clock train.

We lunched at a restaurant with which I had many happy associations. My companions were in high spirits, and conversation was lively. They were all delighted to hear that a large number of Asturian revolutionaries had been killed by the Legionaries and the Moors.

We reached Gijón at eleven o'clock at night and walked in groups to the same hotel.

Throughout the journey I wondered about these officers, who (like all their colleagues, whom I knew so well) were humane, generous, in a word, Spanish, at heart. But how was it that they rejoiced at the killing by the Legionaries and the Moors of hundreds of Spaniards, bereaving wives and children and parents and friends? Why did they so enthusiastically make war upon Spaniards, while during the Moroccan War most of them had counted the days until they could go home again?

I was posted to the supplies department, under an officer who had arrived at Gijón the day before. He was terrified of his responsibilities, and the innumerable minor problems which kept cropping up

drove him to distraction. He had no idea whatever what to do. He went white with anxiety whenever the General Staff telephone rang, fearing he might not know the right answers to what they asked him. True, he was in an unhappy personal situation. After an engagement of fifteen years he had at last got married on 14 October, and on coming out of church he had been presented with a military pass and orders to leave for Asturias at once. He had left his bride with his parents in Madrid and travelled with his trunk as it had been packed for his honeymoon. Naturally he took no interest in the military situation in Asturias. His only concern was his own problem. He opened his heart to me.

"I have been a good and conscientious officer all my life," he said to me. "But our army is a peacetime army, as you know. I don't understand all these war problems, and they seem very involved and complicated to me. I hate them. You know, my passion is music."

I worked in a schoolroom which had been transformed into an office. A telephone had been installed, and never ceased ringing. Everyone wanted supplies. There were few civilians who had not been the victims of some more or less violent form of 'requisition,' and they all came to my office to have their losses registered and get some document which would enable them to claim compensation.

As Franco was in command of the operations, great zeal was shown in revictualling the troops, who never numbered more than six thousand men. I could not prevent fabulous quantities of supplies being sent from Gijón to Oviedo, because the command was not only insatiable but extremely particular. I had to organise train after train. I reported that Oviedo, a town of eighty thousand inhabitants, was situated in the heart of a fertile country, where the supply problem was different from what it was in an isolated encampment

in Africa, and that there was no need for any anxiety because the shops of Oviedo could provide food for five thousand extra men without the slightest difficulty.

Meanwhile ships laden with food were continually arriving at Puerto del Musell. Unloading and storing was a Herculean task. Our greatest embarrassment was the arrival of five hundred cows, for which we had to improvise sheds and drovers ; moreover, we had to provide a slaughter-house, because the command had ordered meat for Oviedo. All this involved making bricks without straw. Eventually we were given some soldiers from the engineers' battalion, who had to work like niggers ; apart from everything else they had to shift two thousand cases of sausages alone.

These sausages had actually been manufactured in Asturias, in a factory near Oviedo. The owner came to see me and protested at his sausages having been bought in Corunna instead of from him direct, especially as he had large stocks available on the spot. I told him that all this had been done at Madrid's orders, and that but for Madrid no sausages would have been bought at all, either at Corunna or in Asturias ; for the whole mountain of sausages was clearly destined to rot.

At night, before dinner, I used to go to a café at the end of the Calle Corrida, which was frequented by all the young ladies of Gijón. They were extremely forward. To listen to them, we had saved them from 'Red barbarism.' They talked to us in the second person singular, and their language was far freer than is usual with young ladies in Spanish provincial towns.¹

"Tell me, are you married or not?" one of them said to me. "I wonder. You ought to choose a

¹ At the carnival balls at Gijón the girls ask the men to dance. People from the rest of Spain find this very astonishing.

Gijón girl. You've no idea how boring it is to spend the winter walking up and down the Calle Corrida and going to the cinema alone ! But now we're going to make up for lost time and have a good time with all you officers. If you like me, I'll be your fiancée straight away. What about it ? ”

“ Oh, no ! don't rush the poor man so,” another extremely beautiful girl chimed in. “ Give the poor fellow a chance ! Let him make up his mind for himself. There are plenty of us to choose from ! ”

And then, turning to me, she added :

“ Isn't it true that men oughtn't to be rushed so much ? But whatever you do don't choose me, because I don't want you. I'm waiting for the man of my own choice.”

The man of her own choice put in an appearance almost immediately. He turned out to be the captain who was always asking where the Rabasaires were. He greeted us with his usual question, “ Where are the Rabasaires ? ” The girls adored him, and he put me completely in the shade.

As soon as the two of us were alone, he showed me a superb Longines watch which he had bought from a Moor at Oviedo. “ If I were you,” he said, “ I should go to Oviedo to-morrow and pick up something for nothing, too. You can get the most extraordinary bargains. If only I had more ready cash I could have done wonders. You only have to go to a company of Moors, or, better still, the Foreign Legion. They are almost giving the stuff away ! ”

He talked as if he were a character out of a picaresque novel. He was not the first rogue I had met in military uniform. Let me state, however, that those who wear uniform in Spain are no better and no worse than other Spaniards. You find all sorts of people in the army, as everywhere else.

“ Where did the Moors and the Legionaries get all this stuff from ? ” I asked.

"They requisitioned it."

"We shall have to go carefully in the Asturias after all this requisitioning. People had never heard the word before, and what with all this requisitioning of houses, cars, horses, and heaven knows what else besides, they may end up by thinking it means the same as stealing. And that would demoralise them, and not be good for the prestige of the army. In fact, very much the reverse!"

"Oh, don't put on airs with me," he replied. "Come and have a drink! What about a whisky?"

On our way to the bar, he started expressing his doubts and apprehensions concerning the quality of the whisky.

"I come from Morocco," he explained, "and I am used to good whisky. Here in Spain they only have White Horse, which is very bad!"

"What whisky have you got?" the captain asked at the bar. "You'll see they only have White Horse," he added, turning to me. "Well, what whisky have you got?"

"Just a moment, sir, here is the list. We have seventy-eight different brands."

The captain was completely taken aback. It turned out that he knew even less about whisky than I do, because the barman told me later that the brand he ordered was far inferior to White Horse, which my English friends tell me has a very good reputation.

"The rascal!" the captain went on muttering. "He's got a bigger selection than you'll find in all Madrid!"

So many cargo-boats full of food poured in from all directions, and, after the reopening of communications with Castile, so many train-loads of all sorts of army supplies, that one was at a loss what to do with

them. I decided to go to Oviedo to discuss the matter with General Lopez Ochoa's staff. It was decided that I had better see the General himself. He received me in his office, and gave me a very hearty welcome. I still regarded him as a sincere Republican, and attributed this reception to some knowledge that I thought he must have of my political opinions ; for he treated his whole entourage with supreme rudeness, and they in turn regarded him less with hatred than with contempt.

I thought General Ochoa very much resembled Primo de Rivera, though he would hardly have appreciated the comparison. He had a gay, cheerful, attractive personality, just like the late dictator, who was his personal enemy ; yet he was in every way inferior to that typical Spaniard, Don Miguel Primo de Rivera, Marquis of Estella.

I explained the situation and described the mountains of food which were piling up for the army in Asturias. I pointed out the difficulty of storing it all, and drew his attention to the fact that all the supplies which had been sent from Gijón to Oviedo at the orders of his staff were lying uselessly in the Pelayo Barracks, and that the meat was rotting. I suggested that he should request the War Ministry in Madrid to stop all food supplies from being sent to Asturias and to send blankets, sheets, mattresses, etc., which were totally lacking, instead.

" Good heavens ! " he exclaimed. " The War Ministry seem to think we are operating in the desert with a hundred thousand men ! Just imagine sending five hundred cows to Asturias, the cattle-country of Spain ! And the same with butter ! They might as well send oranges to Valencia. Meanwhile the units are not even drawing from these supplies, but are quietly buying their requirements from the shops ! I have asked for blankets, sheets, and mattresses, but the whole army doesn't seem to have enough blankets

to supply six thousand men in Asturias. Now just wait and see, we shall find a way out. And as for you, you are transferred from Gijón to Oviedo. See that you get there as quickly as possible. At Gijón they will have to manage without you.”¹

I had considerable difficulty in finding a billet at Oviedo, for most of the hotels had been burned down and the remainder were full. Eventually I found a room in a students' boarding-house which had been turned into a kind of hotel because of the vast influx into Oviedo. The corridors were filled with beds. My room was scarcely big enough for one. The windows were all broken and the partitions full of bullet-holes.

On the first night, when I was just about to undress to go to bed, the man who occupied the next room with his wife came in and asked my permission to cover the holes in the partition with pieces of cardboard which he had under his arm. “There’s no need for us to see each other undressing, is there?” he said. I helped him to fix his pieces of cardboard,

¹ After the triumph of the Popular Front in the election of 16 February 1936 General Lopez Ochoa was arrested and charged with the executions and assassinations committed by the forces under his command in Asturias. He was taken ill, and was transferred from jail to the prisoner’s ward in the military hospital at Carabanchel. One afternoon in August 1936 we were working at the War Ministry, completely absorbed by the grave events then occurring. The director of the military hospital at Carabanchel telephoned and stated that he wished to inform the Minister personally of a very grave event. The Minister, who was overwhelmed with work, asked me to take the message. “I have to tell you,” the director of the hospital announced, “of a serious incident which has just occurred. A group of militiamen entered the building, took General Lopez Ochoa from his cell, and shot him.” “Well, if you weren’t able to prevent it, what do you expect us to do about it?” I replied, slamming down the receiver, indignant that he should have troubled us with an incident that was trifling in comparison with all the rest that had happened.

and when we had finished the room was full of patches. He presented me with the remainder of the cardboard to patch up the window, which let in a most unpleasant cold, damp draught.

The new commandant of the Assault Guards and his officers were quartered in the same house. He was a major with whom I had been on terms of close friendship since boyhood. One of his officers was a lieutenant who had been a friend of mine in Morocco. They were very pleasant people, particularly the major, who was a generous, open-hearted, cheerful, simple soul, popular wherever he went. I had my meals at the same table, and we were served by one of his men, because it was useless to rely on the poor waiter, who was incapable of coping with so many people. The Assault Guard officers talked nothing but shop. They usually emptied a few bottles of Manzanilla before coming in to dinner.

"Now, Martín, we shall see whether you have any brains or imagination" the major said to me one day. "Tell us who paid for our drinks. Guess whose turn it was to-day!"

"His, of course," I said, pointing to a lieutenant who had not yet opened his lips.

All service matters were treated lightly, not excepting the rivalry between the Civil Guards and the Assault Guards in their work of repression.

"We scored beautifully off Doval, the commander of the Civil Guards, this morning," one of them said. "He had informed Madrid he was going to make an important arrest to-day, but found the bird had flown. He didn't discover till midday that the man had been in our torture-chamber since seven o'clock this morning. But Doval is a friend of mine, so I gave the fellow up to him. Oh, no, he didn't make an official request, he just asked me to do him a favour, as between friends; and, as I never refuse a friend, I let him have the fellow, and they took him to the

jail of the Adoratrices.¹ He didn't like being taken to the Adoratrices by the Civil Guards."

The Civil Guards and Assault Guards had been independently searching for a man who had driven a vanload of dynamite from Sotronio to Oviedo during the revolution. The Civil Guards arrested one man and the Assault Guards another. Both were tortured, and admitted the offence on the same day. When the Assault Guards rang up Madrid and announced that they had caught the wanted man and that he had confessed, they were sarcastically told that they must come to an agreement about the matter with the Civil Guards, who also had a man who had confessed ; and as only one man had driven the lorry, they must settle which was the guilty one between themselves. Both prisoners were tortured again, whereupon they both retracted.

This incident was the sole topic of conversation at dinner that night. My friend, the lieutenant from Morocco, seemed to have had too much to drink. I did not know whether he was a Liberal or not, but his expression and the way he looked at me from time to time made me think that he did not share the views of the others. He was certainly the most intelligent of them.

"The problem is quite simple and straightforward," he said, with an expression on his face that reminded me of a character out of Dostoievsky. "We must torture them until they confess. Then we must torture them again until they retract, and so on indefinitely until one of them dies. That simplifies the problem. You can then assume that the dead man is the guilty one, or, if you prefer it, you can assume that the culprit is some entirely unknown individual quietly drinking his glass of beer in some café in Oviedo or Madrid or Paris. For this torture

¹ A religious order active in charity work for reformed women. A jail had been established in the convent referred to.

business isn't altogether one hundred per cent perfect. There are actually many people who believe it isn't one hundred per cent perfect."

"Bravo, bravo, lieutenant!" said the major, rising from table, quite unaware of anything equivocal about the lieutenant's remarks. "There are only two perfect things in the universe, God and Agustín Blázquez's Manzanilla."

On my last night at the boarding-house, they insisted on my going out with them for a coffee after dinner. I was reluctant to do so, for I did not like walking through the dark streets of Oviedo, where it was forbidden to be abroad after nine o'clock. "But aren't the cafés shut?" I asked them. "We go to a place which is open for officers only," they replied.

It turned out to be a small café near the Assault Guards' barracks, where civilians were not admitted. It contained only two or three tables and a long bar. First we were served with excellent coffee, and we threw dice to decide who was to pay for the round. Then we had a round of brandies and threw dice again, and so on and so forth. Very soon the bar was crowded with officers from the Moorish regiments and the Foreign Legion, drinking Manzanilla.

"What will they do when they get really merry?" I asked a captain. "Won't they have to go to bed just when they're feeling really lively?"

"Not at all, not at all," he replied, "they go to the brothel down the road."

"But I thought all the brothels were shut."

"Yes, but the best one's still open, for officers only. We shall be going along there directly."

Every now and then the door opened and an Assault Guard came in with his rifle.

"Well, what do you want here?"

"Sorry, sir, but I wanted a coffee. I'm on duty and I just wanted a coffee to buck me up a bit."

"All right! Come in! Waiter, give him a coffee, and put it down to me!"

When the man had finished his coffee, he would stand to attention and say: "Thank you, sir. What can I do for you, sir?"

"Nothing, thank you. Good luck to you."

"At your service, sir! Good night, sir."

Suddenly the whole atmosphere changed. Cries of welcome resounded on every side. Three officers from the Foreign Legion came in, and everybody pressed round to greet them. They were offered Manzanilla, brandy, coffee. Two of them were very smartly dressed, with neatly trimmed moustaches, and were obviously swells. I found the third even more unpleasant. He was older than his companions and there was a foreign look about him. He was of the typical, repulsive Legionary type. I was introduced to him as if a great honour were being conferred on me.

"Captain Martín Blázquez, Lieutenant Ivanov."

He shook hands with me with a somewhat superior air, though I was his superior in rank.

I wondered why this man was treated with such admiration. It was surprising to see two fashionable lieutenants, who had certainly passed through the Military Academy, obviously proud of the company of an ex-ranker. It reminded me of the triumphant entry into some cabaret of a bull-fighter and his entourage of fashionable young idlers after some particularly brilliant feat in the bull-ring. As Ivanov was an amusing talker and was said to be able to drink anybody under the table, I assumed he must be a famous reveller and boon-companion.

When he got up to go, he made as if to pay, but that called forth a general protest.

"You don't imagine we would allow *you* to pay? The idea!"

Eventually the major, being the highest in rank,

was allowed the very special privilege of paying Lieutenant Ivanov's bill. The way to the brothel lay past my boarding-house, and I took advantage of the crowd to slip away unobserved and go to bed.

Next morning I got up early to move to the Hotel Asturias, and escape the offensive company of the Assault Guard officers. An Assault Guard who was put at my disposal took my trunk to the hotel. Outside the hotel door, in the Plaza de la Catedral, whom should I run into but my friend García. After the intolerable company of my fellow-officers, meeting him was like manna from the skies.

We went into a café for breakfast and a talk, and he told me he had come to Asturias as chief engineer for the reconstruction work made necessary by the damage caused by the fighting.

"Listen," I said to him. "You must know how much truth there is in the atrocity stories told about the army, the Civil Guards and Assault Guards in the Asturias. I live among them, but I know nothing."

"Don't you know about Sirval?" he asked.

"No. Who is Sirval?"

"Sirval was a journalist on the staff of *La Libertad* in Madrid. He seems to have been making notes about the atrocities committed in the Cuenca Minera, and he was arrested to prevent their publication. He was kept in prison for some time without any charge being made against him, and he was kept *incomunicado*. One fine day three officers of the Foreign Legion entered his cell, took him outside, insulted him, emptied their revolvers into him and left him dead. Apparently they all shared equally in the murder, but it was agreed that only one of them should figure as the 'hero.' He is a foreign officer of the Legion who had a long-standing personal grudge against Sirval. I think his name is Ivanov. He is the lieutenant who struts about like a turkey-cock here. For him it was just like killing a Moor belonging to

some recently subjected tribe. Martín, if this crime goes unpunished I shall be ashamed of being a Spaniard."

I told him of my meeting with Ivanov, and how I had shaken hands with him.

"Alas! you would have to wash the skin off your hands to wash the shame away," was his comment.

CHAPTER THREE

Conversations in Oviedo

AT the Hotel Asturias I arranged to have an extra bed for García put into my room. Unfortunately it was impossible for us to have a table alone for meals, and we had no choice but to dine with the other officers.

The mess-president was Colonel Alcazar Leal, whose brothers were both friends of mine. He was a person of naturally agreeable manners, good education, and extreme intelligence, and he was always witty and charming. He had been sent to Asturias to act as examining magistrate in the case of the Socialist deputy Teodomiro Menendez. He was a man of Liberal background, and though he sometimes seemed secretive he was always humane and kind.

Whenever I asked him whether he liked acting as examining magistrate in the Menendez case, knowing only too well how much he hated it, he told me the story of the man whose only comment on being given a medal for saving somebody from drowning was : " I'd like to lay my hands on the brute who pushed me in ! "

Later, when the Socialist deputy Gonzalez Peña, the leader of the revolution, was arrested, his case was also assigned to Colonel Alcazar Leal. He took this so much to heart that he lost his smile and began to look like a real judge.

Next in order of seniority came Lieutenant-Colonel García Escámez, of the Foreign Legion. The

outbreak had interrupted a holiday he had been taking in America, and he had only reached home when all was over. He was born at Huelva and educated at Puerto de Santa Maria, and had the charm of the typical Andalusian. He had been awarded the Golden Cross of San Fernando, the highest decoration of the Spanish army. We immediately took a liking for each other, and whenever the conversation at table became anti-Republican he intervened, knowing how painful it was to García and me.

"Aren't we living under a Republic? Well, then we are all Republicans. That will do! Let's change the subject and talk about women or something," he would say.

García, however, did not like him. "The Andalusians," he said, "charming as they are, are the craftiest people in Spain. They are far the cleverest at getting their own way. Look at Escámez, for instance. He has been twice promoted for distinguished service in the field, and has been awarded the Golden Cross. Apart from his bravery, however great it may have been, that must have needed a lot of intrigue, and a middle-class person, with two commonplace names like García and Escámez, and no influence whatever, must have performed miracles of finesse to get so far. Thanks to that charm of his, he must be an intriguer in a thousand. Otherwise, unless, of course, he's a Napoleon, he'd still be only an infantry captain like the rest."

Another who took meals with us, although he did not stay at our hotel, was Major Alcubilla, who had taken up his command in the Foreign Legion when it came to Asturias. He, too, had been promoted for distinguished service in the field. There was a boyish radiance about him, and he was highly educated and correct. When his chief, the colonel, spoke to him at table, he would sometimes spring to his feet and stand to attention. Occasionally he would treat me with

similar exaggerated deference, although I was his junior.

One of his *bon-mots* had made him famous in the 'good' society of Asturias, where a great deal of poker was played in private houses. When a player had a royal flush or a full house, it had grown customary for his defeated opponent to shrug his shoulders and say : " Oh, well, as Alcubilla says, it's a mop-up." The origin of this expression had been this. When Alcubilla entered Gijón with his Legionaries, only one nest of Syndicalists remained, in the Cimadevilla district. The desperate men refused to surrender. Alcubilla spoke to their leader :

" Do you surrender ? " he said.

" No, never ! "

" Very well then, it's a mop-up ! "

They were all killed. There were no wounded to take to hospital.

Alcubilla had been brought up in France and spoke French almost better than Spanish. He was extremely well-read, and was devoted to Montaigne, of whom he had a knowledge that few Spaniards could rival.

One evening, finding his chief was out, he came up to our room and spent three hours with us. As usual, he was drunk. We talked of anything but politics, or rather he did, and most of his talk had to do with France, of which he was very fond. He talked with such eloquence of Molière, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and particularly Rousseau, that García put aside his work in order to listen. I have never in my life heard such a moving, profound and graceful panegyric to the greatness of France.

He knew Corneille's *Le Cid* by heart, and recited long passages from it with great fire and effect. His enunciation was perfect, in spite of his drunkenness. García and I listened spell-bound, and when we heard the other officers arriving for dinner we were greatly astonished to find that it was ten o'clock. They all

flocked into our tiny room, sat on the beds, let down García's drawing-board and, finding that Alcubilla had been reciting French poetry, implored him to continue. But Alcubilla firmly but politely declined. Later, when we were alone for a moment, he lurched over to us and said with a drunken leer :

" I refused to go on because, with all due respect to them, they are not the right audience. What's the use of throwing pearls before swine ? I only do it for selected audiences, such as yourselves, and only when I've drunk next to nothing, like to-day ! "

At dinner someone reproached him for his refusal, but he gracefully extricated himself.

" A public dining-room is no fit place for an officer to recite in, otherwise it would give me great pleasure to continue here and now. Instead, let me tell you the most significant difference that I have found between France and Spain. You must not laugh, because what I am going to tell you is true. What impressed me most in Paris was not the Louvre, wonderful as it is, nor the Tuileries, nor the Champs-Élysées, nor the Bois, nor the magnificent Boulevards, nor the restaurants, nor even the women. But the thing that made the biggest impression on me was seeing nuns driving motor-cars. Once I actually heard a violent altercation on the Boulevards between a taxi-man and a nun who was driving a van. They had a terrific row, and the public joined in, backing the taxi-man, who happened to be in the right ! "

The roar of laughter that greeted this sally must have been audible in Madrid.

" A fine hullabaloo there'd be if a nun were seen driving a van in Madrid ! " somebody remarked.

" There's no cause for laughter at all," said Alcubilla. " That's the whole point of the story. Let me assure you, gentlemen, that that is so. The whole point is that you don't take what I say seriously, but

roar with laughter. I assure you that in Paris a monk or a priest or a nun can drive a motor-car or van or a lorry without anyone taking any notice. They think it the most natural thing in the world."

"Look here, Alcubilla," said the colonel, "you must have been drinking too much. Let us go, there is plenty of work to be done."

"No, sir, I assure you I have not been drinking. If you don't believe me, ask García and Martín. I spent the whole evening with them."

Generally Alcubilla did not dine with us, as his company was much sought after by the young bloods of Oviedo. There would be a party for him at some restaurant every evening. The wine and food would be specially bought in the morning and sent to the restaurant, and drinking and singing would begin as early as six o'clock. By ten o'clock they would all be drunk, and if you heard an infernal row coming from some restaurant, you could be sure that another farewell party was taking place in honour of Major Alcubilla, one of the sixty farewell parties held in his honour during the last two months of his stay at Oviedo.

Lieutenant-Colonel Escámez and Alcubilla were as devoted as brothers, but there was one matter on which they had an acute difference of opinion every day. Major Alcubilla refused to wear the regulation tie, and this worried the colonel greatly.

Every morning Alcubilla tentatively opened his chief's door and said: "May I come in, sir?"

"Yes, come right in."

"At your service, sir."

"What! Are you wearing that blue tie again, you damned fool? If you can't wear a regulation tie, why can't you at least wear a quiet one?"

The colonel would tell us about it afterwards, laughingly, but with an undertone of bitterness.

"He makes a perfect fool of me with those ties of

his," he would say. "He won't realise that that sort of thing is very important in the army. If I can't get my senior major to wear the regulation tie, I shall have to resign my command."

García was fascinated by the psychological problem of Alcubilla, and when we were alone he would make me long speeches about it.

"I have a natural distaste for violence," he said, "and I am convinced that the army is the country's curse. I know that for more than a century it has prevented Spain from prospering, that it desires to stifle every sign of progress, and that its intervention in politics becomes more and more alarming every day. But apart from all that, Martín, I find it absolutely intolerable to see so much importance attached to the question of Alcubilla's ties. Nobody asks him to explain why his troops massacred the unfortunate Asturian workers and left no wounded, or why so many acts of brigandage and pillage have been committed by the Legion. But the fancy ties he wears keep his commanding officer awake at night.

"One must recognise," he continued, "that there are only a handful of Spaniards who live for some constructive purpose and aim at rescuing Spain from her backwardness. There are few who would like to see her magnificent human material adequately exploited, who would like to make of her a nation respected for her virtues, her spiritual grandeur, her prosperity, and her culture. Isn't it natural that we should be completely out of sympathy with an army which has no qualms about its appalling military inefficiency, but is dreadfully upset by questions such as that of Alcubilla's tie? Martín, can you explain to me how a man of Alcubilla's sensibility could consent to the atrocities committed by his men?"

"To my mind, García," I replied, "all the crimes committed, and to be committed, in the Asturias by the army, the Assault Guards, and the Civil Guards

are due to frivolity, a sort of crazy frivolity, a real intoxication with frivolity. Frivolity arises from lack of moral training. Soldiers rarely have moral pre-occupations. They study a little mathematics in order to pass the entrance examination of the Military Academy, and that is all. Once admitted, their education is over, and they are offered no intellectual or moral inducements of any kind. Alcubilla is the first soldier I ever heard mention Montaigne, and he is a living demonstration that if one does not live as one thinks one ends by thinking as one lives. But no, it is not they. The worst of it is that they only do what Madrid tells them. If they were not congenitally frivolous, they would become congenitally frivolous, because they are only puppets. The strings are pulled by the Government, which is the quintessence of all that is frivolous and reactionary in Spain, and is presided over by Alexander Lerroux, who is the personification of immorality and crass ignorance, nurtured on newspaper cuttings and soap-box phraseology. As for Escámez, I agree with you, he always looks after the main chance. He always does what will benefit his reputation most. The atrocities committed by Alcubilla's men will result only in honours and congratulations being heaped upon him. But he knows very well that it won't do him any good if later on somebody says : 'García Escámez ? Oh, yes. When he was in command of the Legion at Oviedo things were in such a state that his senior major wore coloured ties in uniform ! Just imagine it ! What a state of affairs !' In my opinion Alcubilla is simply another of those born anarchists with whom Spain abounds. Does he belong to the Left politically ? I have no idea. But he has talked to me several times in an even more objectionable way. 'I am more of a Communist than any Communist can be, but there is not a single point on which I agree with the Marxists,' he has said to me. In Morocco I hear he was a close

friend of Lopez Bravo,¹ and in spite of his charm he never gained the full political confidence of his colleagues. That is what makes me think that his present conduct is based on anxiety and mistrust. On the one hand he is afraid of not seeming sufficiently enthusiastic in repression ; that is why he puts no restraint on the Legionaries' excesses. On the other hand, his conscience pricks him, and he comes to us and recites verses as if he wanted to make a confession, but could not make up his mind. Did you notice the strange note in his voice when he recited twice these lines of Tartuffe :

*' Les hommes, la plupart, sont étrangement faits !
Dans la juste nature on ne les voit jamais ;
La raison a pour eux des bornes trop petites ;
En chaque caractère ils passent ses limites,
Et la plus noble chose, ils la gâtent souvent,
Pour la vouloir outrer et pousser trop avant.
Que cela vous soit dit en passant, mon beau-frère.' ”*²

My immediate superior, Major Sangüesa, was staying at the same hotel. He had just been promoted and he still glanced proudly at the new stripe on his sleeve whenever his eyes fell upon a mirror. He was forty-three, bald, short, plump, deaf, and arthritic,

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Lopez Bravo was the officer who distinguished himself most in the Moroccan campaigns. He was a Spaniard of the type of Cortez and Pizarro. He sailed from Ceuta in command of the forces destined for Asturias, but the Government received information that he was a dangerous Red and was on the point of inciting the troops to revolt. He was arrested at sea and subjected to every kind of indignity and persecution until his death in the prisoners' ward at the military hospital of Carabanchel in 1935.

² Alcubilla was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He was in command of a battalion of riflemen in Catalonia when the insurrection broke out in 1936. His battalion rose with the rest. He was condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life.

and he was a Carlist because his father and grandfather had been Carlists before him. He suffered from an acute inferiority complex in regard to women. He was a bachelor, and had a pathetic envy of all married men. He regarded marriage as a paradise, but it was denied him, because his parents were dead and he had two sisters, both of whom were old maids, whom he had to keep. They were older than he and were extremely religious, and they tyrannised over him as though he were a small boy. They never left him a moment's peace. Sometimes at the Café Peñalba, where everybody in Oviedo went, he would be surrounded by a bevy of the most fashionable young women, but his sisters would come and look through the window, and this would put him in such a state of nerves and panic that it was pitiable to behold.

Colonel Escámez and I would join the group, and Escámez would put on all his Andalusian charm and cajolery and say :

" Well, well, well, here's our friend Sangüesa, the lady-killer, at it again ! Isn't he just like a sultan surrounded by his odalisques ? Isn't he a perfect Don Juan ? I wish I knew which of you lucky young women his eye will fall on ! You may say that hitherto he has been a crusty old bachelor, but all that's changed now, and you take my word for it, lately he has grown very tender-hearted indeed. Moreover, he has reached the age of discretion, and that's just when men fall in love and make the biggest fools of themselves ! "

A very pretty girl, who had the reputation among her friends of being a wicked little schemer, and had the advantage of a face with an absolutely blank expression, chimed in and said :

" Well, if Sangüesa marries an Oviedo girl it will show his good taste. And if he does, he won't choose the cleverest, but somebody who falls in love with him and makes him fall in love with her."

" Didn't you see the look in her eyes, Sangüesa ? "

exclaimed Escámez. "It's no good trying to escape. You're a lost man. Your fate is sealed. It won't be any use coming to me afterwards and saying it was my fault. I wash my hands of you."

"You two have no business to have anything to do with unmarried girls," the young lady replied. "We shall tell your wives all about you, because we know quite well that you are married, in spite of all your impertinence. Now then, clear out of it, both of you, and leave us alone with Sangüesa."

Sangüesa would take the girls home, and come back to the hotel beaming with pleasure. But as soon as he was in the lift he would remember his sisters, dining at home alone, who would be sure to demand an explanation, and all the joy would go out of him.

Sangüesa irritated me more than anyone else in Asturias, though I must say he tolerated more things from me than he would have from a brother.

"If you have such a high opinion of marriage, why don't you get married?" I would ask him.

"But how can I get married? What will become of my sisters? I shall never be able to marry. Surely you can understand that!"

"No, I don't understand," I would reply. "I have always objected to the practice, so common in Spain, of a man's sacrificing his whole life for the sake of his unmarried sisters. Get married and send your sisters to a convent, or to a cheap boarding-house, or let them live with you, and if they make your wife's life insufferable, just kill them off. The earth will go on turning, and I don't even think they'll gao! you for it, and I'm sure you won't have any regrets. I'm not a lawyer, but I imagine such cases will have been provided for in the criminal code, and I am sure you will have a water-tight defence, because your sisters are vile, selfish creatures, who want to spoil your life."

The major and I shared an office in the Santa

Clara Barracks, where the Civil and Assault Guards were billeted, and many prisoners were kept. The neighbouring rooms were military court-rooms, so that all day there was a continual coming and going of prisoners, escorted by armed Assault Guards. The staircase was always crowded with women, all in mourning and accompanied by children who were in mourning, too. By making a *détour* I was able to enter my office by another door, avoiding the poor women, who, with typical Spanish pride, transfixed every man in uniform with hate-filled glances. All day long they waited there, hoping to see a son or a husband being brought up for examination, and thus make sure that he was still alive.

Sangüesa constantly complained of having to force his way through a revolutionary mob :

"It's disgraceful for a major not to have free access to his office," he would say. "Besides, the hatred with which they look at you is intolerable."

"But you wouldn't like them to be so servile as to smile at us, would you, sir? The pride of those people makes me proud of being a Spaniard."

I never concealed my views, but to him they seemed so abnormal as not to deserve a reply. One day he said to García :

"I forgive Martín for saying things which would be unpardonable if he were not such a very good fellow. But I am convinced that he is mad, stark-mad!"

One night I took my cap and cloak and left the office without a word, slamming the door behind me. Sangüesa came out after me and stopped me.

"What's the matter with you to-day? You seem even crazier than usual," he said.

"Nothing," I replied. "I just feel an irresistible desire to go for a walk in the San Francisco park."

"You really are completely mad! Isn't it raining? There won't be a soul in the park! Go to the Café

Peñalba, have a cup of coffee and wait for me for a few minutes. I shan't be long."

Outside in the street I was stopped by one of the clerks who had heard the door slam and seen the major rush out after me. He was a Republican, and had given me many proofs of his goodwill.

"Excuse me, sir, but have you had a row with the major?" he asked.

"No, my friend, but I think the major's right, I am going mad. I can't bear to sit in my office and hear the groaning and the shrieking any longer. Every time they torture somebody I have to sit there and listen to it. It's driving me out of my mind."

"It's terrible, but it's not so bad as it was," the clerk replied. "Just imagine what I have to go through, sir, in my flat on the ground floor, where you hear the shrieking night and day. It's terrible. For the first few nights I had to give my wife sleeping-draughts, to enable her to sleep. She spends all day praying that God will punish those beasts."

When I think of all the things I told the major, I have difficulty in understanding why he never reported me. García, who witnessed some of my outbursts, said: "Oh, no, he'll leave you alone. He likes the way you slash out at him."

All day long the major and I had rows about the windows. He wanted them open, to let the fresh air in, in spite of the intense cold, while I wanted not only the windows, but the shutters closed, and to work by electric light. On mornings when I reached the office first the major would find me working with the windows and ventilators closed and the light on. When he was first I would find the windows wide open.

The windows opened on the barrack-square. Prisoners would be standing with their faces to the wall at intervals of five yards. Behind each one was an armed Assault Guard. The slightest movement

by a prisoner meant a blow with a rifle-butt. That was how they waited for their interrogation.

This went on for days, weeks, and months. It was insupportable.

"Excuse me, sir," I would say, rising from my desk, shutting the windows and putting on the light. Soon afterwards the major's patience would be exhausted, and he would rise in his turn, switch off the light and let the daylight in.

"But listen, Martín, what does it matter to you what they do down there? Don't you realise that if the Left ever come into power they will vote an amnesty and all these people will be released? Doesn't that make it necessary to give them a lesson they won't forget so quickly?"

"But don't you understand, sir, that that is the whole tragedy? They won't forget, and they will never be able to forgive, and they ought never to forgive."

One day García came to fetch me, and he surprised us in the midst of our interminable wrangle about the windows.

"Sangüesa," he said, "let me ask you a few questions. I want to find out if you can answer them, because Martín couldn't. I always believed Assault Guard officers were ordinary men of flesh and blood, who drank and smoked and had girls or wives and children like everybody else. Now can you tell me this. Where did they get this diabolical idea of making those unfortunates stand with their noses to the wall from? It rather looks like a priest's notion to me. Because that sort of punishment has always been the monopoly of the priests. I shall never forget that, when I was at college, for the most trivial fault they used to make me kiss the floor a hundred times, or kneel for half an hour with arms extended to make a cross."

"Clear out, both of you, you exhaust my patience,"

the major exclaimed, without, however, looking in the least displeased.

"I warn you," García said when we were alone, "he is a hypocrite. One day he will take his revenge on us, or rather on you ; because he doesn't take me seriously."

"Never mind, he doesn't take me seriously either, and anyhow I don't care. My patience is exhausted."

Another of our companions was 'the ugly captain.' I don't know whether it was his large mouth and black teeth that earned him this nickname, or the general ungainliness of his person. In any case, that is what we called him, and all the girls of Oviedo did the same. Apparently he was called 'the ugly captain' everywhere. He commanded a company of Legionaries. He had been a contemporary of Escámez and Alcubilla at the Toledo Military Academy, but treated them with a servility that no other officer descended to. Alcubilla called him a vulgar toady, and said he had been the same at the Academy. When Escámez discovered that he had forgotten his tobacco, 'the ugly captain' would announce that he had enough for two and effusively press a packet upon him. Incidents of that kind were of daily occurrence.

He had the bad taste always to bring the conversation round to politics, and he was always discussing at length the latest article in the *ABC*,¹ his favourite paper. Whenever anyone was mentioned who had the reputation of being a Republican, no matter whether he were a politician, a scholar, or an author, 'the ugly captain' always dismissed him by saying : "He ought to be shot." He would have liked to shoot everybody.

One day the conversation at a neighbouring table, at which a revenue inspector, two bank directors, a public prosecutor, and a government attorney sat, turned to the arrival in Oviedo of the deputy Córdón

¹ A leading monarchist paper.

y Ordás, who was conducting an inquiry with a view to denouncing the excesses of the armed forces in the Chamber of Deputies. They were all very indignant, and we heard them exclaiming : " What a disgrace ! It's absolutely unheard of ! Why don't the armed forces insist on a person like that being turned out of Asturias at once ? This is what we have to put up with as long as Boots¹ is president. To think that a deputy of the Left *canaille* should be allowed to come here and sully the glorious reputation of the troops who saved Asturias from Marxist barbarism ! "

' The ugly captain ' rose and went over to them.

" So you agree with me that he ought to be shot, too ? " he said.

" No, the whole three hundred thousand the *ABC* talks about ought to be shot, and not one less," the public prosecutor replied. " You, the military, can organise this country better than anybody else."

" Good heavens ! " García said to me *sotto voce*, " if our soldiers are useless for war, which is destructive and therefore comparatively easy, how can they be expected to do something constructive, like organising ? "

" Three hundred thousand is not enough," the ' ugly captain ' continued. " The whole Marxist *canaille* ought to be wiped out."

" Why do you want to kill so many people?" the colonel interrupted. " To solve the unemployment problem ? Or do you think that if everybody else is dead you'll have a better chance with the women ? Leave these civilians alone, they have nothing to do with us."

One day, to our great surprise, we found that the captain had disappeared.

The military court at Barcelona had sentenced three officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Ricard, Major Perez

¹ The nickname of the then President Alcalá Zamora.

Ferrás, and Captain Escofet, to death, and the Government, to throw a sop to its supporters, the clerical CEDA, wished at least one of them to be actually executed. But the President of the Republic vigorously opposed this. On August 10, Don Niceto Alcalá Zamora argued, a certain number of officers had risen¹ and had been condemned to death, and enormous popular demonstrations had demanded the death sentence for them. But in his opinion there was no need for any cabinet minister to ask for a reprieve, since nobody had ever really thought of shooting them.

"That is not the point," the reactionary Government replied. "The generals were gentlemen."

After much bickering, it was agreed that of the sentenced men, one from Leon, one from Gijón and two from Oviedo—Sergeant Vazquez and a man called Argüelles, should be executed, and that the others should be reprieved. Thus the wishes of the President were met, if only partially, for he had wished nobody to be shot, least of all military men of rank.

On the morning of 'the ugly captain's' disappearance, Sangüesa and I heard the fifes and drums of the Legion's band as we left the hotel for the office, and we stopped to watch the procession. We noticed that 'the ugly captain's' company was commanded by a lieutenant.

"Where are they coming from so early in the morning?" the major, who was not *au fait* with events, asked me.

"They are coming from the Pelayo Barracks, where they have been killing Sergeant Vazquez," I replied.

It turned out that 'the ugly captain,' who should have been marching with his company, had reported sick an hour before the execution. His company had been ordered to carry out the sentence. The colonel,

¹ General Sanjurjo and part of the garrison had risen against the Republic on that day in Seville.

suspecting something, had sent for a doctor immediately, and told him to carry out the examination very carefully, because he was resolved to have the captain cashiered if he were shamming.

The doctor had found ' the ugly captain ' in perfect condition. He had merely wished to avoid the execution. He was put under arrest, and the same day the War Ministry, having been informed by telegram, published his expulsion from the Legion. When the details became known everyone in Oviedo extolled the colonel's military virtues.

" You can't trifle with the Foreign Legion," the public prosecutor declared. " Millan Astray and Franco can rely on it. In the Foreign Legion no dishonourable actions are permitted ! "

CHAPTER FOUR

A Non-Political Army ?

WHEN we left our office at half-past twelve we invariably went straight to a bar, the name of which I no longer remember, opposite the Campoamor Theatre. The long counter was always crowded with non-commissioned officers, often with officers and civilians among them. You passed through the kitchen to the room reserved for the officers stationed at Oviedo. We used to stay there till two o'clock, which was lunch-time, drinking beer or Manzanilla, or sometimes cocktails. Meanwhile the proprietor prepared ten different kinds of *tapas*¹ in the kitchen ; broad beans with pork, *paella*, fried fish, salmon, etc. A notice was put up each day showing the order in which the *tapas* would be served, and we had agreed among ourselves that we would rigorously adhere to it.

Like good soldiers, the first thing we always did was to study the notice.

"Heavens ! I am out of luck to-day !" someone would complain. "Fish and tomato salad is number seven, and as I want some I shall have to drink seven glasses of Manzanilla before getting to it. If anyone has got to number seven and doesn't like tomato salad, I'll exchange with him !"

¹ *Tapas* are appetisers served in Spain with drinks before meals.

At this point a number of women would invariably arrive from a French brothel in the San Lázaro district, escorted by their *madame*. She was good-looking and extremely charming and intelligent.

"How many did you bring along to-day?" Lieutenant-Colonel Escámez would ask her.

"Seven, and your humble servant."

"But that's the whole family!"

The smart Frenchwoman always sat at the colonel's side.

"But don't the police object to the girls walking in the street at this time of day?" he once asked her.

"Not at all. They know we only come out to have a pleasant chat with you."

"I can't understand the Spanish custom of not allowing these young ladies out before two in the morning," Alcubilla said. "I often wonder why our country is so backward, and I am inclined to think that one of the chief reasons is that these young ladies are kept shut up all day long. That was what was wrong with the famous Seville Exhibition. Men came to see it from all over the world. They admired the Giralda and the Alcazar, but as there was no roulette or baccarat and there were no girls to be seen, after a few days they didn't know what to do with themselves and went home. Now France is a conservative country, profoundly Catholic and with high moral standards, and family life plays an extremely important rôle there. Yet the French know how necessary these young ladies are to a well-organised republic, and treat them kindly. If they treated them as we do, the French would lose half their tourist traffic, and they know it!"

The same joke was repeated every day when the time came to pay the bill.

"These young ladies will pay to-day," Colonel Escámez would tell the proprietor.

"Oh, no, we won't ; you will," the girls would retort. "What do you think you get your extra pay for? For doing nothing all day long?"

"Aren't they hard, these young ladies!" the colonel would exclaim. "The troops solve their unemployment problem and give them work all day and all night long, and then they won't even buy a drink for their boy friends! All right, we'll pay to-day, but this is the last time! Proprietor, to-morrow the ladies will pay!"

Sometimes, shortly before dawn, after all the 'customers' had gone, we would all go together to their establishment, each hiding a bottle of wine under our coats, and we would sit with the girls round a big table, with a big brazier alight. The *madame*, though French, was not stingy, and served plenty of ham, salmon, sausages, and sweets. We ate, sang, and danced. As we never gave them any 'work,' our relations with them remained very pleasant.

After lunch it was *de rigueur* to go to the Café Peñalba, where a corner was specially reserved for us. The Assault Guard officers had their meeting-place at the same corner. One day I prevailed upon García to join us, but it was for the last time. That day, when the Assault Guards arrived, it was obvious that something unusual had happened, for their faces were radiant with satisfaction. They had just arrested the deputy Gonzalez Peña, the leader of the rebellion. They were proud of having outwitted the Civil Guards, who had been too late. The handcuffs which had been used in arresting Gonzalez Peña were passed from table to table. Everybody wanted to examine them, though they were quite ordinary handcuffs. One lieutenant in the Assault Guards, whom I had not seen before, turned out to be a relative of one of the

revolutionaries' victims. In a tone that permitted of no argument, he stated that the army would tolerate no mercy for Gonzalez Peña, that the time had come to make an example of one of the leaders, and that he must be shot.

I sat with García at a table somewhat apart.

"Observe how the army does not interfere in politics," he said. "Not only do the generals interfere, but all the other ranks as well. And this newly-fledged lieutenant dares to anticipate the Government's decision on the fate of Gonzalez Peña."

"You will remember, García," I replied, "that *à propos* of military interference, I have always reminded you of the history of Spain in the nineteenth century. The generals played such an important rôle that one might say that it was they who really exercised the State power. Riego, Espartero, O'Donnell, Narvaez, Prim, Serrano, succeeded one another with their *coups* and their *pronunciamentos*. Generally they were only the pawns of the monarchy or of non-military interests. But the lower ranks, the officers and non-commissioned officers, were proletarians, distinguishable from the rest of the people mainly by their debts, their unusual skill at cards, and the fact that they were expected always to be smartly turned out. Only the nobility, and a few rich men who were ennobled, rose above the rut, and it was from these that the generals who have done so much damage to the good name of Spain were recruited. The serious thing to-day is that not only the generals, but the whole army wishes to intervene in politics. You know that the sergeants have declared that it is unjust that only generals should have the privilege of making insurrections. The revolt of the military masses has made things far worse. For since the time of the Defence Juntas¹ the

¹ The Defence Juntas were a military organisation which, in 1917, enforced the resignation of the Minister of War who wanted to prevent the officers from interfering in politics.

whole army has been in a virtual state of rebellion, and that is particularly true to-day, when they are all united in hatred of this Workers' Republic, whose monstrous design it is to keep the army out of politics and make it learn its job."

The newly-fledged lieutenant had acquired considerable standing among his colleagues, having invented a name for one of the current tortures which, like all the others, dated back to the days of the Holy Inquisition. He called it the 'aeroplane torture.' It has since been described as follows by the journalist Benavides :

' A revolutionary is taken, bound and suspended by the arms from a rope passing through a pulley. He is then hoisted in mid-air and whipped till he swings to and fro like a pendulum. The work of keeping the pendulum swinging is extremely exhausting, and therefore it is necessary to have two shifts, who relieve each other. How long this goes on depends on the revolutionary's endurance. His cries are answered by gross insults, mostly directed at his parentage.'

Another subject of conversation that afternoon was the effectiveness of the various methods of torture employed. They were compared and contrasted, and their relative advantages weighed up. We listeners were convinced that they were all effective. The various reactions of the victims were also discussed. Some, we gathered, pretended to go mad, but another lieutenant, whom I had not seen before, explained that the most effective method of telling whether this madness was simulated or not was to continue with the torture.

To García and me this seemed the most revolting thing we had ever heard. We left the café.

" That is what happens to those who are not afraid

of dying for an ideal," García said. " Their testicles are twisted."

" Where do they get these ideas from ? " said García. " How much deeper can such moral iniquity sink ? How can you bear to live among such people, Martín ? I shall go back to my workers, who are still men enough to admire those of their class who have the strength to die for an ideal. Come with me, and perhaps their company will purge you of the degrading contact of your colleagues. But tell me, how did they invent those tortures ? "

" Invent ? They invented nothing. They have only revived the practices of the Holy Inquisition," I answered. " They may have been helped by one of the busybody monks who are so active in the CEDA ; someone like the celebrated Peña, who warned the inquisitors not to be deceived by feigned madness, torture being one of the best methods of distinguishing between real and feigned madness. I remembered the passage, listening to that lieutenant. In reality, of course, these people merely give vent to their lowest instincts, being assured of complete impunity. It is the bottommost pit of moral degradation."

CHAPTER FIVE

Azaña Makes a Speech

ALL my efforts to escape from this distasteful garrison life failed, and I remained in Asturias for a whole year. I appealed in vain for a transfer to Madrid, and eventually nothing remained but to apply for leave on private grounds. My application was granted on November 19, and though officially my leave only began in December, Colonel Aranda, the military commandant of Asturias, allowed me to take a three-day trip to Madrid immediately.

That evening Oviedo looked entirely different. There was a great coming and going of motor buses, and the crowds that filled the main streets were very different from those which had so often turned out to greet the 'heroic' soldiers who had subdued the rising. They were silent crowds, hastening to mount the buses going to Madrid for Azaña's meeting at the Campo de Comillas.

Most of the buses were open, in spite of the teeming rain. It would take them three hours to cross the ridge of the Puerto de Pájaros, which was already covered with snow ; and a trip of three hundred miles under these conditions, and at night, and with no protection from the weather, seemed an act of madness to me ; I was greatly astonished to see that no one seemed in the least dismayed at the prospect of spending the night exposed to the bitter cold.

At half-past eight I went to the station to take the

nine o'clock train to Madrid, and the sight that met my eyes was a most extraordinary one. The special train for the Azafra meeting was just about to leave, to the accompaniment of deafening cheers from the crowd. The cheering and the enthusiasm as it drew out of the station were greater than I had ever before heard in Oviedo. I was nearly deafened by the shouts of: "Long live the Republic!"

I stumbled upon a major of the Civil Guards. Although he was in mufti, he was unmistakably a Civil Guard, as he revealed by his attitude towards this scene, which he found most unwelcome. After cursing the '*canaille*' on the platform, he suggested boarding the train immediately, so that we should not have to stand all night.

We were lucky to find a single seat in a first-class carriage. Although it was I who found it, my companion had no hesitation in accepting it when I offered it to him, while, thanks to the generosity of the other passengers, a perch was found for me by raising the arm between two seats. The same was done for another passenger on the opposite side of the compartment, which was thus occupied by eight persons instead of the six for whom it was intended. Then four friends of the other passengers came in and sat on their knees, completely blocking up the compartment. When the ticket-collector came round it was impossible for him to enter, and the major promptly involved him in a heated argument. Why the devil didn't he get a proper seat for me? Hadn't I a full ticket? The conductor respectfully but firmly pointed out that he did not possess superhuman powers and could not increase the available space, and that the overcrowding was due to an additional special train to Madrid having failed to appear, though it had been announced and the tickets had been sold. Eventually the passengers, having bought their tickets, had stormed the regular express, as they

insisted on going to their meeting. His advice was to be patient and put up with it. Finally he asked the major for his ticket.

"I am a major of the Civil Guards, and have a free pass," he replied.

"Did you reserve your seat in advance, according to the regulations?"

"No, I never do."

"Excuse me, but then you have less reason to complain than anybody else."

At this the major lost his temper. He expressed his feelings, which he assumed I shared, regardless of the hostility of all the other passengers.

"You see what a pitch the Republic has brought us to!" he exclaimed. "You see what little authority the Government has! If the repression hadn't been so half-hearted this sort of thing couldn't have happened! If they had pumped a few bullets into Azafra when he was arrested in Barcelona we wouldn't have to put up with this sort of thing now!" And so on and so forth. It was the same old tune.

I was pleased to see that our travelling companions, instead of resenting this behaviour, as I had feared they would, took it in good part. They merely smiled and shrugged their shoulders, as if to say: Poor chap! let him talk all the nonsense that he likes; after all, we don't believe in miracles, and it's the nature of the beast. Can the leopard change his spots?

To crown his misfortunes, the major, before whom so many political prisoners had trembled in Asturias, had had no dinner, and had no chance of getting one, because the corridor was so crowded that it was impossible to reach the dining-car. Moreover, the other passengers, who had listened to his outburst in silence, gave up their seats for short spells to friends of theirs who were standing in the corridor, and the compartment was now occupied by younger and more

boisterous people, who talked loudly and enthusiastically about the great swing to the Left that this meeting at the Campo de Comillas was going to initiate. The first to be punished, they declared, would be the members of the armed forces who had been guilty of cruelty and political partisanship during the era of repression. The major badly wanted to interrupt, but he had the sense to hold his tongue, realising that these youngsters were quite capable of throwing him out of the window.

Owing to the length of the train the heating did not function properly, though there were two engines, and it was terribly cold. The poor major, who suffered from chronic bronchitis, had bad fits of coughing, and implored me to lend him my overcoat, because, he said, he had fever.

The train made long stops at various stations in the mining district and then again at La Robla. At each station additional crowds forced their way into the train, insisting on going to Madrid. "Listen, comrade," a miner standing in the corridor said to the man sitting beside me, "move closer to the window, and explain to these other comrades the law of the incompressibility of matter!"

An authoritative voice said:

"Comrades, we are going to Madrid in order to let Spain know that we are a disciplined force and the majority of the people. Even those who do not want to will have to listen to what we are going to say. But now go home and rest. There is no need for more people to go. Remember that your employers may take reprisals if you go to Madrid. It is a nine-hour journey, and it is senseless to cling to the footboards. That would mean accidents and deaths. Haven't there been enough victims already? Let the train go! Long live the Republic!"

We reached the Escorial only one hour late, and the general fear of arriving too late for the meeting

disappeared. Those who were most anxious about this were reassured by a pleasant-looking man, who looked like a schoolmaster and insisted that the train would certainly arrive in time, because the engine-drivers and firemen wanted to go to the meeting too !

The scenes on the roads were equally impressive. From the carriage window we saw streams of cars and lorries crammed with enthusiastic people, who greeted the train with shouts of : " Long live the Republic ! "

We reached Madrid at half-past nine. Two friends of mine were waiting for me at the station, with a car and special tickets for the meeting, and we went at once to the Campo de Comillas.

The Campo de Comillas is a huge field, about seven miles from Madrid, and there are no direct means of communication between it and the capital. The organisers of the demonstration were somewhat afraid that it was so huge that it might not, perhaps, be completely filled, which would detract from the impressiveness of the scene.

Most of the demonstrators did not, of course, possess cars, and therefore hundreds of thousands of men and women had to walk. They walked in the middle of the road and made it difficult for cars to pass. But that did not matter. I shall always remember that seven-mile drive in a crowded car, with any number of people standing on the footboards.

I believe that everybody felt as I did ; namely, that the pleasure of listening to Azaña took second place to the pleasure of actually being present. It was a magnificent and unforgettable spectacle. For the first time in history half a million Spaniards¹ were united for the purpose of extricating Spain from the morass in which she had been plunged for three hundred

¹ Four hundred thousand had tickets for the Campo de Comillas, but thousands more listened to the loud-speakers outside.

years. To appreciate the significance of this event, one must bear in mind the traditional impossibility of bringing two Spaniards together for any constructive purpose.

In the light of subsequent events I doubted the correctness of the judgment I then formed under the influence of the occasion itself. But at the time I felt certain that all those thousands and thousands of Spaniards had not been drawn together merely by a desire that the atrocities committed by the Government in the repression of the October rising should be avenged. Undoubtedly the Government had used the Foreign Legion and the Moors to suppress the revolution, and the task had been carried out with the most brutal violence, and with complete disregard of the laws of war. Prisoners had been executed wholesale without trial, and the number of deaths after the fighting was over, during the period of so-called 'pacification,' had far exceeded the number of deaths in action. The police had pitilessly flogged and tortured not only those who had taken an active part in the crazy adventure, but even those who had only freely expressed their opinions. The blood so stupidly, so wastefully, shed amply justified the making of a powerful protest at the first opportunity. But here, I felt, we were gathered for nobler aims.

Nor did I think that this meeting was primarily prompted by indignation at the cynical alliance between the anti-clerical Radicals and the clerical and sanctimonious CEDA, which constituted the present Government. This Government consisted of men who were primarily distinguished for their anti-Liberal, anti-democratic, and anti-Republican conduct, but it had presented itself to the Cortes with a declaration of Liberal, democratic, and Republican principles. True, within its ranks a quiet division of labour had taken place. "The CEDA ministers had kept all the key positions for themselves, while the

Radicals, like hungry dogs, had battered upon all the advantages of office." The Radicals behaved like what they were, the most corrupt force in Spanish politics, and the notorious gambling-permit scandal, the scandal of the malversation of Colonial Treasury funds, and many others of the same kind, followed.

The majority of the Spanish people certainly found it intolerable to be governed by a set of incompetent adventurers and ignorant amateur soldiers, who understood nothing of the art of government or of the meaning of political power, and less than nothing of the meaning of Republicanism. Our disgust at the shameless misgovernment of this impudent coalition, which had been initiated by the CEDA and the Jesuits, which had won the elections with the help of the Monarchists but had secured power with the help of the Radicals, was certainly sufficient to justify our presence at the Campo de Comillas. Yet the chief reason why half a million Spaniards were gathered there was our deep concern for the future of our country.

It seemed evident to me that our common motive was a desire to do away with the backwardness which had been the curse of Spain for the past century and to bring Spain to the level of the most advanced countries.

One thought which struck me at the sight of that impressive mass of humanity remained deeply impressed upon my mind. It is obvious, I said to myself, that the improvement in communications has created a Spanish national consciousness, which will supersede the predominant regional loyalties of Catalans, Basques, Asturians, Galicians, Castilians, etc. This new national consciousness, reinforced by the improvement in general education, will in time destroy the spirit of Castile, which belongs to a different age. The specific creative qualities of Castile had their proper place in the era of the Wars of Religion and the era of overseas

Imperialism ; but they have become not only obsolete, but positively disastrous. Situated one thousand feet above sea-level, practically cut off from the rest of the world, Castile, so far from being cosmopolitan, is hostile to all impulses that reach her from Spain's maritime provinces, and she turns her back on all wider and more universal things. The maritime provinces, capable of assimilating and adapting themselves to modernity, are tyrannically checked at every turn by her influence. Unlike the Castilians, the people of the maritime provinces possess the analytical spirit and the knowledge that modern civilisation is analytical. They want the direction of Spanish affairs to be in the hands of those capable of taking advantage of the progress of Europe and of the world at large.

These impressions of mine were confirmed in Azaña's magnificent speech. It was when he touched on the things I have just mentioned that the cheers were loudest. For the most disgraceful feature of CEDA policy, which he attacked in his speech, was that it was based on Castilian ideas, worthy of Philip II.

The climax of the meeting was reached when Azaña dealt with international affairs. The clerical Government had chosen the moment when the Abyssinian crisis was at its height to initiate shady negotiations aiming at a *rapprochement* with Italy. The Government was attempting to revive the old Habsburg policy of encircling France. The man who is now President of the Spanish Republic, taking his cue from this, said some things which are still topical to-day.

"It is an ineptitude," he said, "to suppose that the foreign policy of any country can be changed according to the whims and interests of individual political parties or according to their ideological affinities. Such a conception is absurd. The foreign policy of every country is always determined by unalterable factors, such as its geographical position, and by

factors which only change very slowly, such as its economic interests. Every country must always keep in mind these factors, which do not change from one day to the next. A foreign policy is inherited from régime to régime. It is not necessary to go and look for lessons from history, in order to convince oneself of this truth. In our own time and within our own immediate experience, we have seen violent upheavals destroy the political structure of certain countries from top to bottom ; yet those countries have gradually worked their way back to their previous foreign policy, which was unalterably dictated by their interests, their geography, and their history. These are things which must not be toyed with. We are well aware of their gravity and their importance, and we therefore feel bound, even now, to proclaim some of our guiding principles concerning these matters, principles which, I am convinced, express the views of public opinion in this country.

"Spain desires peace. This seems to me the point upon which all Spaniards agree : We want peace. Spain's general and permanent interests are linked up with the maintenance of peace for herself and for others, with the preservation of her territorial integrity and of her political independence. These are the natural aims of Spanish foreign policy, and there is no place where Spain can better work for peace, independence, and territorial integrity than the League of Nations. I will explain.

"The League of Nations is not an ideal working ground, but no better is available. (Hear, hear, cheers.) This would be true, even if Spain armed itself to the teeth in a vain and Utopian attempt to protect herself by her own forces alone. For it is patent that Spain is a weak country and has not at her disposal the resources of a great power. Spain has accepted certain pledges towards the League of Nations, as all its other members have done, in

exchange for common protection and collective security.

"Alas! It is easy to make out the case against the mistakes and the defects of the League. It is easy indeed. But to rejoice in the failures of the League is to take up a very stupid attitude. A final failure of the League would be a universal disaster. If Spain, if our Government contributed to such a failure, it would be more than a grave mistake, it would be an act of suicide. (Cheers.) At the League, in accordance with the attitude taken up by other members, our position is one of calm impartiality and justice. Let me express my conviction that a similar attitude would be advisable when we discuss these questions at home with the frankness to which we are used in talking both of national and international politics.

"It would be advisable, in these problems which do not imply Spain directly, not to take the real world for its caricature, not to indulge in conceit and in violent political passions, not to hurt the feelings of friendly peoples, least of all in their hour of trial, and never to forget that life is long and that it does not pay to slam a door ostentatiously for all time. Above the various political régimes rises the concept of a law of the human race, a concept asserting itself gradually. This concept emerged out of the feelings of the peoples, not out of the alliances of their governments. Behind the various political régimes, whether we like it or not, there are the toiling and suffering peoples themselves. They sometimes do not raise their voices, but for us, Spanish Republicans, it would be an absurdity to forget their existence."

The air was rent by the frantic cheering of half a million people. It was a stirring moment for all who took part in this tremendous demonstration. I saw groups of Communists cheering even louder, if that was possible, than the rest. It gave me the conviction that the world-conscience of which Azaña had spoken

was a fact, and that this meeting was one of its manifestations.

I went back to Asturias, where I remained till December 1, when I returned to Madrid. I put my uniform away, and until January 1, I completely forgot I was an officer. In the meantime I was fortunate enough to secure my transfer to the War Ministry, where I reported for duty in mufti at 10 a.m. on that day. That was how my New Year began. There, like all my colleagues, I engaged in the hard labour of clock-watching. We watched the hours go by until a quarter to two, when a general rush for the door took place, and the office saw no more of us till ten o'clock next morning.

I reverted to my old habit of generally spending the afternoons at the Ateneo,¹ completing certain studies which I had had to interrupt when I was sent to Asturias. Sometimes I spent the time talking in the lounge, where the absence of Don Miguel Unamuno and of the great Valle-Inclán was much commented on. No longer could we listen to the delightful talk of those two distinguished Spaniards, which had been so much enjoyed by a circle of rapt young listeners. Occasionally, for a change, I would play poker at various aristocratic houses ; those taking part in the games being mostly ladies who had grown somewhat weary of their husbands.

Several times I met General Millan Astray, the creator of the Foreign Legion in Morocco, and altogether an unusual type of man. He had made General Franco, and had greatly influenced the outlook of the officers who had been promoted for distinguished service in the Moroccan war and now filled the highest

¹ A sort of anti-clerical free university with a library, and a centre of Spanish Liberalism.

commands. He was a bad loser at cards, and was very apt to forget his manners and become rude and bad-tempered. All the reactionary ladies lionised him. He had lost an eye and an arm, and the glory of his wounds made a great impression. Other officers idolised him, and he condescendingly accepted their hero-worship. He was also sometimes patronising towards me, though I made no secret of my attitude towards him and made it plain that I regarded him with contempt. Later, before accepting an invitation to a card-party, I always made sure that I should not have to meet him. He was certainly one of the strangest generals in our army.

Meanwhile the Portela Valladares Government had been formed, and the President of the Republic had authorised the Premier to dissolve the Cortes and go to the country. It was hoped that the elections would result in the formation of a strong Centre Party, which would serve to put a brake on the extremists and replace the Radical Party, which was going down in general ignominy.

The election manifesto of the Popular Front was issued on 15 January 1936. It contained nothing daring or advanced. On the contrary, it was timid and conservative, to the surprise of the whole country, which wondered at the sight of Communists allowing themselves to be drawn along the road of 'bourgeois democracy.' The manifesto was signed by the Republican Left (Azaña), the Republican Union (Martinez Barrios), the Socialist Party, the General Workers' Union (the UGT, the Socialist trade unions led by Largo Caballero), the National Federation of Young Socialists, the Communist Party, the Syndicalist Party (a group which had split from the Anarcho-Syndicalists, under Angel Pestaña), and the Party of Marxist Unification (the POUM). The manifesto stated that in the event of victory at the polls the various working-class parties represented in this

coalition would not participate in the Government, which would consist of representatives of the Republican parties only, but would support it. All the parties concerned had expressed their approval of the new programme, and given their signatures to that effect, not omitting the point demanding a 'vigorous affirmation of the principle of authority.'

The campaign was begun with vigour and enthusiasm by all the parties. The advantage the Right enjoyed by reason of its financial resources was offset by the tenacity of the Popular Front.

The propaganda of the Right was aggressive, and extremely insulting to its enemies. It described the leaders of the Popular Front as murderers, thieves, etc., and shrank from no slander or insult. It seemed to be based on the good old principle that something always sticks. Any Spaniard who kept a cool head in the midst of this orgy of mud-slinging could not but wonder how its authors had the impudence at the same time to come forward as the champions of the Holy Church. The cynicism with which they pretended to be fighting for God and country was revolting. Even more revolting to level-headed Spaniards was the manner in which they arrogated to themselves the monopoly of patriotism and denounced all their opponents as 'Marxists,' i.e. enemies of Spain. The Left were held up as enemies of Spain. Included in this general denunciation were not only Marxists, Republicans anti-clericals, but anyone who did not share the dismal ideals of Philip II.

Meanwhile the Government of Portela, who was an old politician of the monarchical era, exploited the whole bag of electoral tricks, dating from the times of the Restoration,¹ in which he was encouraged by Don Niceto Alcalá Zamora, the President of the Republic.

¹ After the end of the first Republic, in 1874, the Government had established an elaborate apparatus for 'managing' the elections.

Portela did his utmost to secure a majority, exerting all the administrative pressure he could bring to bear.

But the Right felt so certain of its strength that it disdained the co-operation of those groups, backed by the Government, which desired to make headway between the two extremes. The Left also spurned them ; there was nothing they feared more than the Centre groups which enjoyed the President's support. They had had a century's experience of elections invariably won by the Government of the day, which always succeeded in falsifying the popular verdict.

At the last moment the Centre became aware of the disastrous consequences of their isolation, which, as a result of the new law by which all the seats in a constituency were to go to the party gaining the majority, would necessarily lead to their almost complete elimination. They therefore proposed an alliance to the Right. This was accepted, and in many provinces the alliance became effective. In return for their support, the Government granted them the support of the public forces, which in the rural districts, where the civil governor's whim was law, was equivalent to 30 per cent of the total vote. The chief anxiety of the Left, as usual, was the danger of a falsification of the election results, and was well founded. In the backward provinces of Navarre, Palencia, and others, in which the coalition with the Centre was effective, and consequently the results were falsified, the Right won.

Elsewhere the people gave an unambiguous answer to the enormous hoardings of the Right, with their slogans : ' We want 300 seats ! ' and ' Gil Robles to the War Ministry, with unlimited powers ! ' The Popular Front was returned with an absolute majority, and in the big towns, where there could be no coercion of the electorate, its majority was largest. The figures were an eloquent tribute to the effectiveness of official pressure in other areas.

If you took a map of Spain and marked in black the

provinces where the voting went in favour of the reactionaries and the Centre, the whole periphery of the peninsula would remain white, and so would its heart, Madrid. But the poverty-stricken steppes of Old and New Castile, populated by bigots and reactionaries and traditionalists, cut off from all civilisation, lacking all irrigation and producing wheat at an uneconomic rate, would be marked in black. These provinces represent the Spain of yesterday.

On 17 February 1936, the day after the elections, I went to the Ministry in a state of high glee, which I was unable to conceal, for I knew that in Madrid the Popular Front had already won several hundred thousand votes, outdistancing the reactionary *bloc* by many thousands, while the efforts of the Fascists proper, who had secured two or three thousand votes only, had resulted in a complete fiasco. But my colleagues were as dejected as I was elated. Before I had taken off my hat and coat I was ordered to go home and put on my uniform, because one senior officer and one subaltern were to turn out on guard duty in each departmental section, and my name was one of the first on the rota for this duty.

I was much surprised and vexed at the strange idea that a considerable proportion of the Ministry's staff should have to turn out on guard duty, and when I came back in uniform I discovered that the order had been issued neither by the Minister nor by the Government, but was the result of an agreement reached between the generals at the head of the various departments. I immediately realised that this meant that the army proposed intervening as a result of the triumph of the Popular Front, and that preparations for a *coup* were afoot. I promptly took my cloak, went home, put on mufti again and went to see some

friends at the headquarters of the Republican Left, in order to warn them of the gathering storm. But they assured me that all necessary steps had been taken and that the army would not dare to act.

Don Manuel Azaña took over that night. Next morning I calmly went to the Ministry as though nothing had happened, feeling that nobody would dare to object to my having abandoned my post the day before. This forecast was correct, and I felt confirmed in my conviction that this strange order had been a preparatory measure for an intended *coup*. Otherwise they would not have failed to punish me for my disobedience to orders. Actually, no mention of it was ever made.

The Right knew only too well that the Left of 1936 was no longer the group of idealists which had governed Spain during the first two years of the Republic and had been brought down by a campaign of lies and slander. It was convinced that the Left would not relapse into its old mistakes, and that this time, instead of contenting itself with timid experiments, it would act energetically. The Right realised that the Popular Front, after the sad experience of the two years of the Gil Robles-Lerroux Government, was a much more dangerous enemy than the Governments of the Left under the Constituent Assembly¹ had ever been.

On their side the Republicans, and all those who had voted for the Popular Front, were convinced that the Right, now that it had had the experience of the

¹ The Constituent Assembly was elected after the abdication of King Alfonso, and sat from 1931 till 1933. It had a Left majority. The next election gave the Right a majority, and led to the Government of Señor Lerroux, later joined by Señor Gil Robles.

elections and knew that it could never gain power by democratic means, would resort to force. The idea that the reactionaries would abandon power without a struggle was inconceivable. I believe this was felt by everyone who voted for the Popular Front, with the single exception of Don Manuel Azaña.

I was therefore alarmed at the personal influence enjoyed by Azaña, which seemed to me to be fraught with danger. I regarded it as a disaster that the country should be governed at such a critical moment by a man who lived at such a high moral altitude as he. Azaña was convinced that no military rising had a chance of success, and, worse still, believed that morality should be the guiding-string of policy. He was one of those who believe that truth and morality are bound to triumph in the end, in Spain as elsewhere.

In the state of convulsion Spain was in at that time, trying to rule her by means of eloquent sermons was like trying to re-establish peace in the middle of a battle by reading the Bible at the top of one's voice.

Very soon revolutionary competition between the Left Wing Socialists, the Syndicalists, and the Communists began. The Syndicalists advocated the use of force, even the force of arms, among the masses and provoked one aimless strike after another. Meanwhile the Communists kept their word and supported the Government, while the misguided and aggressive Left Wing Socialists, led by Largo Caballero, aspired to playing the part of the revolutionary leaders of the working class.

The part played by Largo Caballero was particularly distasteful. Everyone remembered that after the October rising he had repudiated all knowledge and responsibility for it before the military tribunal. Now, after the triumph of the Popular Front, he claimed

all the glory for it in his paper *Claridad* and denounced as 'Centrists' those Socialists, who, like Gonzalez Peña and Indalecio Prieto, had taken an active part in it.

Caballero's activities were not only distasteful, they were dangerous. To play at revolution at such a moment showed a complete lack of common sense and amply demonstrated his lack of judgment and his second-rate intelligence. Those who backed him and pushed him forward, though they were more cultured and intelligent than he, were positively immoral. It was a crime to open the door to the common enemy in this way. The reactionaries looked on in surprise at the manner in which the Left made things easy for them. It was a tragic blunder for Caballero to foment revolutionary fanaticism and indulge in demagogic agitation in this way, and in April, when Indalecio Prieto gave the first warning, and announced that such a policy must inevitably lead to a military *coup*, the only result was that the *Claridad* redoubled its attacks on him and his prophetic views.

Things went from bad to worse. It became evident to thinking people that unless the situation were immediately remedied a catastrophe was growing more inevitable every day. It is nonsense to pretend that Spain was a happy Arcadia where nothing ever happened. The facts—hundreds of burned-down churches, hundreds of dead, fifteen hundred wounded—are undeniable. Everyone in his senses knew that Spain, far from being a happy and blissful country, was living on a volcano.

The Government and the papers of the Left attributed everything to *agents provocateurs*, while the Right attributed everything to 'Moscow gold.' As usual, the Right used the name of God in its incitements to violence, and employed slander, insults, and

lies. The majority of the attempts at political assassination were directed against leaders of the Left, such as the Socialist Don Luis Jimenez de Asua, Vice-President of the Cortes and professor at Madrid University, and the judge Don Manuel Pedregal, who was murdered because he had sentenced some Fascist murderers.

I must admit I had never believed in the famous *agents provocateurs*. Their existence presupposed a certain degree of secret organisation, and though some papers attributed every crime that was committed to them, not one of them had ever been seen, much less caught. Moreover, their alleged activities were an excellent excuse for the existing chaos. But one evening I saw an *agent provocateur* with my own eyes.

I was taking home in a taxi a lady with whom I had spent the afternoon. As we entered the crowded Calle de la Montera, we were stopped by a number of men carrying tin cans. They took no notice of me and my companion, but forced the driver to let them fill their cans from his tank. I happened to recognise the man who seemed to be the ringleader. He was a former taxi-driver, whom I had often seen at a rank at the Hippodrome, near my house. I had once had a row with him about a tip, and had frequently noticed him reading reactionary papers, which is very unusual among members of the Spanish working class.

By the time he and his followers had filled their cans and started down the Calle de la Montera, the church of San Luis had already burst into flames. So their services were not required after all.

The traffic of Madrid was liable to be obstructed at any time of day by processions, mostly of children and young people of both sexes wearing red shirts. This

made the Right very indignant. I, too, though my political opinions are very different from those of the Right, felt sick at heart at the senseless revolutionary slogans they shouted, which were so out of place in Madrid, where the workers are so imbued with the mentality of Calderón that they are capable of killing their own daughters if they find them so much as kissing their fiancés.

And now thousands of young people, marching in processions with their papas and mammas, shouted slogans such as :

‘ Children, yes ! Husbands, no ! ’

As if the tension was not already great enough, Don Niceto Alcalá Zamora next laid down his office as President of the Republic. The subsequent presidential election took place in the absence of constitutional guarantees and therefore without safeguards for the minority’s freedom of propaganda. This was not because of ill-will on the part of the Government, but simply because of the convulsive state of the country. As the Right did not take part in the struggle, even the most stupid could see that they had given up playing the democratic game and had made up their minds to resort to force.

In these circumstances Don Manuel Azaña’s election as President was regarded by many of his own friends and by a large part of the country as an evil omen.

Meanwhile Prieto and Gonzalez Peña had been stoned at Socialist Party meetings. This was a natural result of the revolutionary campaign for ‘ working-class unity ’ undertaken by the Caballero group. But it caused millions of level-headed Spaniards to shudder,

not only because the act in itself was barbarous, but because the split within the forces of the Left gave the Right encouragement in the preparation of its insurrection. At the same time the conflict within the Socialist Party barred the road to the only solution which might have avoided the catastrophe. It prevented Don Manuel Azaña from calling upon Prieto to form a Government. Prieto believed it essential to stifle the military insurrection before it was born, and he was the only man who might have done it.

CHAPTER SIX

The Presidential Battalion

‘Everyone knew it in Madrid,
Everyone but he . . .’

(Popular Song about a Deceived Husband.)

ONE morning in July, I went out in my uniform. Its smart cut (it was made by Herranz, King Alfonso's tailor) and my tall, shiny boots made me look like a tailor's dummy.

The disadvantage of going out in uniform was that it meant taking a taxi. Travelling by tram or tube had become positively unpleasant. Working-class men and women stared at you with unspeakable hatred, and you knew that those who looked at you with admiration and sympathy were longing for the army to crush the Popular Front. To have bought *El Socialista* and carried it ostentatiously under one's arm to avoid the hate-filled glances of the workers would have been *infra dig*. Besides, that had been done in the early days of the Republic by many who later took part in General Sanjurjo's rising in 1932.

I had just been drafted to the Presidential Guard. When I reached the barracks I found Major Menendez in conference with the captains of the recently formed Presidential Battalion. They were waiting for me before making the final choice of uniform for the new battalion and deciding on the necessary purchases. After these details had been settled, we gave our

approval to the list of men specially chosen for the battalion for their reliable Republican antecedents. They had been hand-picked from the whole army by a committee of three captains. I appealed to Menendez, jokingly, but with an undertone of real earnest, to find quarters for the battalion that very day. I also appealed to him to have the list of chosen men posted immediately in the official War Ministry gazette, ordering them to report at once. I remember my words well.

"The battalion will be only five hundred strong," I said, "but with one reliable battalion as a basis we shall be able to form workers' militias, and prevent 'them' from taking us alive."

That phrase about 'taking us alive' was to be used thousands of times by me and others in the weeks that followed.

Two captains were immediately sent to make the necessary purchases, while Menendez and two other captains went to the Montaña Barracks to request permission to quarter the battalion there. I went to the Ministry to arrange for the immediate publication of the list of men drafted to the battalion.

After lunch I put on mufti again and went to the Café Negresco in the Calle Alcalá. There, in our usual corner, I found the President's aide-de-camp and two other officers engaged in an animated discussion with the waiters, who knew we were Republicans and showed their approval. Azaña's aide was complaining bitterly about the lift strike; and he had good reason to do so, since he lived in an eighth-floor flat with his father, who was too old and infirm to be able to negotiate the stairs and had been compelled to stay at home for more than a month.

"You don't know yourselves what you want," he

said to the waiters, who were all Syndicalists, "and if you are stupid enough to keep on going on strike and having these criminal quarrels with the Socialists, I don't know what there will be to prevent my dear colleagues from setting up a military dictatorship."

Major Menendez arrived, followed by Colonels Asensio and Valcazar. I did not know whether the two colonels were genuine Republicans or whether they had merely joined us out of antipathy to Franco, Mola, and the rest, and because they wanted to shelter under the wing of the Popular Front. Anyhow, their presence hampered our conversation and we studiously avoided talking politics.

I went to another table to talk to Major Menendez alone.

"I went to the Ministry," I told him. "I lost my way in the innumerable departmental sections and sub-sections. Eventually I found myself in the office of the Minister's secretary. There were a lot of people there already, among them a lot of wire-pullers dating from the times of Gil Robles. The atmosphere was as if Gil Robles or one of his like were safely ensconced in the ministerial chair already. The faces of the two adjutants, Barceló and Hidalgo de Cisneros, were eloquent enough. Hidalgo de Cisneros, whom I have liked and respected since boyhood, asked me what I thought of it all. I told him I thought we were all mad, and that we would let them take us alive. The Minister's secretary received me politely and ordered the list of men for the new battalion to be published this very day. On my way out the corridors were full of suspicious groups. And whom should I run into but my distinguished friend, Colonel García Escámez!"

"Colonel Escámez," Menendez replied, "certainly didn't come from Pamplona for a change of air. Doubtless he brought Mola's latest instructions. Everybody knows that these people are continually

plotting. It's disgraceful that they should be allowed to do so in the corridors of the Ministry of War. But tell me, what do you think of the Casares Quiroga Ministry ? ”

“ I am positive they will take us all alive. Quiroga is a real ‘ Civilón.’ ”

‘ Civilón ’ was the nickname Casares Quiroga had been given by a group of Republican officers. He had been made Prime Minister and Minister of War because Largo Caballero and his friends would not hear of a Prieto Government. Prieto, I repeat, was the only one of them who realised the imminence of civil war, the shadow of which haunted him perpetually. But in the eyes of Largo Caballero and of his paper *Claridad*, and of his henchmen, such as Alvarez del Vayo, Araquistain, Baraibar, Margarita Nelken, etc., the man of the moment was Casares Quiroga. To them anyone was better than Prieto. Just think of it ; Quiroga had actually dared to inflict minor penalties on some officers of the Civil Guards for offences for which severe punishment was clearly indicated in the military code.

Throughout June the papers, particularly the illustrated papers, had been entertaining the public with stories of the prowess of a bull named Civilón, which had been going to take part in a *corrida* at Barcelona. Thousands of photographs of this famous animal had been published, with accounts of how, in spite of his unprecedented ferocity, he let little children stroke him. Then came the day of the bull-fight, and he turned out to be as gentle as any cooing dove. He fled from the horses and from the *toreros*, and he had to be taken away. Everyone had expected him to win the competition for pugnacity and the greatest number of horses killed. When it became known that finally he had to be withdrawn and was driven from the ring by the sticks of the angry crowd, the disillusion was extreme. So much for Civilón.

"Tell me the result of your mission to the Montaña Barracks, sir," I asked.

"The people there were as helpful as they could possibly be," he replied. "The two colonels and the other officers were so very, very charming, and so very effusive in their protestations of devotion to the President, that I thought they protested a little too much. In fact they put me on my guard. I found their behaviour very, very suspicious indeed. So much so that I have decided to find quarters for my men elsewhere."¹

From the Café Negresco I went to the house of Dr. Tapia, where I had been invited to a poker-party in honour of the arrival of the distinguished Colonel Escámez. The party included Dr. Perez, the colonel, and Don Natalio Rivas, who had been a Minister in the days of the monarchy. They were waiting for me, and I had to play, although I should have preferred to be an onlooker.

The colonel dealt.

"Shall we play honestly, or as usual?" he asked.

We played keenly and in silence, for, as the colonel said—he was the only one who opened his mouth—"Poker is a silent game."

Then he spoke to me.

"Poor Martín," he said, putting on his Andalusian charm. "Poor Martín, how sorry we all are for you, having to sacrifice yourself and play poker like this, though it bores you to death. Just look how you're raking in the money! My heart bleeds for you!"

At seven o'clock the game was stopped for refreshments.

I did not enjoy drinking tea in this company. The Perez couple were good Republicans, but I had nothing in common with anyone else who was there. They took advantage of the opportunity to talk politics, or

¹ These two colonels were killed a few days later when the militia stormed the Montaña barracks.

rather to hurl insults at all the leaders of the Popular Front, notably Azaña.

The ladies started by asking how 'the queen's cadets' were. 'The queen's cadets' was what they called the officers of the Presidential Guard.¹

Then Don Natalio Rivas started painting a black picture of the situation in Andalusia, where he owned great estates

"Agriculture is in a desperate condition," he declared. "It is impossible to pay more than starvation wages. The cause of the trouble is the poverty and unproductivity of the soil. They want to ruin us, and our ruin will mean the ruin of the whole country."

I did not know what to reply. I knew only too well the tragedy of the parched agricultural lands of Spain. But his remarks were addressed to me. His tone, his gestures, his whole attitude expressed disapproval of me, or so at least I imagined. I shall never forget the aggressive way in which he looked at me, indicating his horror and indignation at the idea of an officer of the Spanish Army committing the unpardonable sin of being a Republican.

Don Natalio Rivas went on talking.

"The Spanish Socialists are barbarians," he announced. "They are as destructive as locusts, devouring everything in their path. How different they are from the Socialists in Scandinavia!"

"Listen, Don Natalio," I said. "All sensible people at this moment ought to be guided in their words and actions by one consideration. Passions are running high in Spain, and no more fuel should be poured on the flames. In short, nobody ought to want civil war. Don't forget that our poor Spanish Socialists have an enemy very different from any the

¹ One of the wildest and most stupid rumours spread by the Right about Azaña was that he was a homosexual. As a lie, a thousand times repeated, comes to be believed, in the end many people genuinely believed it.

Scandinavian Socialists have—the Carlists, the most ferocious political animal the world has ever known. When I see men like you, who were brought up to love liberty, trampling the banner of Liberalism beneath your feet, I am deeply grieved, Don Natalio. It gives me a pitiful idea of the moral qualities of man. Are you not one of those who detested the Carlist wars which ravaged Spain? Are not all your best feelings linked up with Liberalism? Were you not one of the ‘sons of Castelar’?¹ Yet you are like the majority of mankind, and lose all reason as soon as you think your interests are threatened. You are a man of seventy, and have played a great part in the life of Spain, but it is of you I think when I say to myself: Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

In connection with Don Natalio Rivas I shall skip three months in my narrative and describe an incident that took place three months later, at the beginning of October, when I motored one night from Madrid to Alicante to greet, in the name of the Prime Minister and Minister of War, the first Russian ship that landed supplies for Spain. I spent the night at Dr. Perez’s magnificent country-house. When I saw the doctor in the morning, I asked him what was the matter, because he looked so very worried.

“It’s nothing,” he said, “only Don Natalio has turned up. Just imagine how dangerous that is! What will happen when they learn in Alicante that he is here? You must help me.”

Don Natalio had arrived by the ordinary train, with his three grandsons. The Republican Government had given him a diplomatic passport, authorising him

¹ Emilio Castelar was the chief Republican leader after the fall of the first Republic.

to leave the country. When I met him he was completely broken and demoralised. I went to see the civil governor of Alicante, who was one of the best men in the service of the Republic. He flatly refused to authorise Don Natalio to take the aeroplane to Toulouse. "If he goes to the aerodrome, the Syndicalists will kill him outright," he explained. I replied that I did not believe there was any such danger, because Don Natalio had three children with him. "In any case," the governor said, "I cannot undertake the responsibility of letting him out of Spain, in spite of his diplomatic passport, and I must insist on your putting him on the Barcelona train to-night. Let him try his luck there! If you leave him on my hands here in Alicante, I can't guarantee his safety."

I left my driver in a café, and drove Don Natalio and his three grandsons to the nearest railway station. I learned later that they succeeded in leaving Spain.

After a few more games of poker we went in two cars to the Cuesta de las Perdices for dinner. The drive along the Corunna road was very pleasant. The weather was perfect, and the people in the cars we passed had happy faces. My winnings at poker paid for an excellent dinner. But there was no overcoming the barrier between these people and myself.

"What is it that is so strange about you?" somebody asked me. "Aren't you just as bourgeois as we are, or even more?"

"There is one big difference between you and me," I replied. "And that is, I am incapable of hating those who disagree with me. I am still more incapable of the mortal hatred that you nourish for those who disagree with you."

"Then you are different from all other Spaniards,"

the colonel remarked, "because we all hate those who disagree with us with a mortal hatred."

Although I felt full of foreboding, I put myself out to be as attentive and pleasant as possible to these people. I told them jokes and stories and succeeded in making them laugh.

We returned to Madrid at half-past one in the morning. At the colonel's suggestion, he and I took everyone else home first, and finally we were left strolling through the streets, which were still crowded with people, alone.

We walked down the Calle Alcalá without exchanging a word. In the Calle Castellana we sat down on a seat. It was a superb night; one of those superb Madrid nights when it is difficult to go to bed.

"How do you like being in Pamplona?" I eventually asked.

"From the military point of view, it's quite satisfactory," he replied. "Fortunately, I am not in command of a regiment, but of a brigade. Commanding a regiment has become very disagreeable. Both the senior and junior officers, and particularly the latter, are completely out of hand. They hate the Government like poison. I wonder what will happen next. One thing is certain, things can't go on like this."

"One thing that I cannot understand," I said to the colonel, "is why the officers, nearly all of whom are hard up and are always borrowing on next month's pay, should want to start an insurrection just because an effort is being made to introduce a little justice and common sense into the handling of the agrarian problem. I cannot understand why they want to introduce general ruin and catastrophe and fratricidal war for the sole purpose of maintaining a system which gives more than 71 per cent of the land in the province of Seville, for instance, to two thousand big landowners, and divides the rest between ninety thousand starving

peasants. In Badajoz, Cordova, Cáceres, Salamanca, Ciudad Real, Jaén, and elsewhere it's the same story. Moreover, it seems to me that we soldiers are only poor devils, and that there's no reason why we should be called upon to give our blood now. Most Spanish officers choose the army as a career simply as a way of making a living. Nobody has any illusions about it, even at the cadet schools. You know the famous story of the Spanish officer who inherited half a million from an uncle in America. He applied for his discharge immediately. 'The causes which obliged me to serve King and Country having disappeared, I herewith present my irrevocable resignation,' his letter to the Ministry began. That attitude is typical of the Spanish officer."

"That's Azaña's fault. Azaña ruined the army," Colonel Escámez remarked.

"No, colonel, the problem must be taken more seriously than that," I replied. "The army was rotten long before Azaña, long before Primo de Rivera, even. With the transition from the agricultural age to the industrial age, countries such as Spain, whose geographical position prevented them from being industrialised, lost their military strength, and their war potential, compared with that of industrial countries such as Germany or England, sank practically to zero. I have repeated *ad nauseam* that the army of an agricultural country without a clearly defined international policy is at the mercy of the industrial countries, who alone can manufacture armaments. An agricultural nation must content itself with a purely defensive army, based on aviation and fortifications, and must devote its energy to the development of the country, increasing its industries and improving its agriculture, which is the foundation of everything, and thus approaching countries of a higher economic level. The military critics of Azaña's army reforms have revealed a degree of ineptitude for

which they ought to blush with shame, and your friend Mola is the worst of the lot. Their principal argument is that Azaña has reduced the army to eight divisions. You have always contended that as France has forty million inhabitants and Spain twenty millions, the Spanish Army ought to be at least half as strong as the French Army. But you forget that, in estimating military strength, man-power is only one factor, and a minor one compared to the country's actual and potential armaments, the industrial capacity and financial strength behind them, the development of communications, and many other things as well."

"In other words," the colonel replied, "you wish our national humiliation to continue. You wish our country to go on decaying until nothing is left. That shall never be. It is you who are blind and not devoted to your country's interests. What you cannot and will not understand is that the present international situation gives Spain a chance of winning back a place in the sun. Spain must build another Empire. It is absolutely vital to unite the whole country for that sublime task. The reason why we Spaniards are so deeply divided is that we lack a common national ideal. Those who want to padlock the tomb of the Cid¹ must be shot. Those who believe that Spain must pay the penalty for excessive aspirations by taking a back seat for ever must be wiped out. And you are one of those who think and always have thought like that. Perfidious Albion has lost her power, as was proved by the glorious conquest of Abyssinia. France is crippled by the Popular Front. I tell you there are thousands and thousands of Frenchmen who do not care a fig for the axiom that

¹ Joaquin Costa, a great reformer, after Spain had lost Cuba and the Philippines to the United States in 1898, proclaimed that it was time 'to lock the tomb of the Cid with a triple lock and learn from Europe.'

Frenchmen forget their divisions in the face of foreign aggression, and would prefer to see Fascism triumphant all over Europe to collaborating with their own Socialists. France and England destroyed our grandeur and ruined our prestige. We have been sitting at home, stewing in our own juice, for centuries. But the day of reckoning has come. For the sake of the great task ahead of us we shall have to kill off a few thousand madmen, the people that King Alfonso called the *canaille*.¹ But it is written, Don José, it is written. Our future lies in Africa. We can reckon on the fact, and we are reckoning on it, that there are thousands and thousands of Englishmen and Frenchmen who prefer Fascism to Russian Marxism, and, with Rome and Berlin pulling the strings—good-bye to the British Empire, and the French colonies! The Liberal democracies must be destroyed. Italy will be able to put Egypt in the bag, beside Libya and Abyssinia. That will be a fine Roman Empire for her. Spain will establish her frontier at the Atlas Mountains, and will extend her sway over Morocco. The Moors want it themselves. And Germany can take her pick, in Europe and overseas. That is what will happen, Martín, and thousands of books will be written exalting the resurrection of Imperial Spain!"

"That is wish-thinking, colonel, nothing but an extravagant dream. If it really comes to fighting, the Spaniards, the Italians, and the Germans may win the first battles, but they will lose in the end. The ultimate winners will be those with higher ideals than yours; those who work and suffer, and have an indestructible faith in the march of civilisation. It is late; let us say good night and go to bed. The Pamplona train only goes at half-past ten, and you

¹ In an interview during the Great War King Alfonso said: "In Spain only the *canaille* and myself are for the Allies." By the *canaille* he meant all those intellectuals and Liberals who later formed the Popular Front.

have time for a few hours' sleep. And tell Mola this : Your beautiful dreams will never come true, and all you will achieve will be to plunge Spain once more into the horrors of the Carlist Wars, with their mass executions and their moral degradation. Sterile heroism breeds moral poverty. You know quite well what I have always told you, that the Spanish army is not even good enough for war. Good night, and *bon voyage !*"

I never saw Colonel Escámez again. I learnt in August, through wireless messages intercepted at the Ministry of War, that he was in command of the rebel advance-guard repulsed in the Sierra de Guadarrama. He is now one of Franco's leading generals.

Before falling asleep I kept thinking of this plan of robbing France of Morocco and Algeria. That, I said to myself, is not an idea that would ever have occurred to any of our politicians, much less to one of our soldiers. It savours of Rome to me. And I thought to myself how naïve it was to expect our officers to keep their oath to serve and obey the Republic. Obviously Mola and Escámez were organising the Carlist Requetés, though I had heard Mola describing how the Carlists had shot his grandfather as a Liberal, and though the fascinating but pagan Escámez was about as much of a Carlist as I was.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Eve of the Outbreak

ON July 13, when I arrived at the headquarters of the Presidential Guard, none of my colleagues were there, because they had spent the night keeping guard over the body of Lieutenant Castillo, who had been assassinated by the Fascists on his own door-step, just after he had said good-bye to his wife and was about to cross the road. I found a written order waiting for me, relating to some unimportant business which took me to the War Ministry. I saw no sign at the Ministry to show that anyone regarded Castillo's death as a serious event. This absence of any kind of reaction to the incident, far from reassuring me, increased my apprehensions.

Before leaving the Ministry I went upstairs to greet my old colleagues. In the corridor I happened to meet a typist who had worked for me, and with whom I had been on friendly terms. She was an officer's orphan, and owed her job to the creation by Azaña of a special corps of Ministry typists. This must have been very useful to her, as she was unmarried and no longer as young as she had been. But not only was she a reactionary and a Fascist like all her colleagues, but she was very religious into the bargain. I had rarely needed a typist when working at the Ministry, and on the rare occasions when I had needed one I had always been in doubt as to which girl I should interrupt at her needlework or at the important job of

writing letters to her young man. I had usually solved the problem by asking :

" Which of you young ladies is the most religious ? Which one of you is the most charitable ? "

" She is, she is," the others had invariably replied, indicating the one who now stopped me in the corridor.

" I am sorry, miss, but the jury has given its verdict," I would say. " You are the most charitable. It's not my fault, and I don't regard charity as a punishable offence, but you must come and type for me."

" Oh, I shall be only too pleased, I like working for you."

To-day she stopped me in the empty corridor and whispered :

" What luck that I've met you ! I have been thinking of you so much this morning. You see what has happened to Lieutenant Castillo because he associated with the Socialists ? I don't want anybody killed, and I shan't tell you who told me this morning, but when I heard it, as a Christian I was horrified. One of them has already fallen, they said, but that's only the beginning. They said, if it goes on like this, within a few days we shall be rid of all the traitors ! Captain, promise me, be careful not to be murdered, too ! Don't go out alone at night, and come home early in the evening."

There was nothing new in what she told me, but I thanked her and kissed her upon the cheek.

" You are the maddest man I have ever met, and you will certainly go to Hell, but for the love of the Blessed Virgin do what I say ! " she said.

The captain whom I wished to see worked in a room full of officers who were avowed Fascists, and I had no desire to shake hands with them. I therefore sent a note up to him by a commissionnaire. This captain was one of the unluckiest people I have ever met.

Misfortune dogged him in all his actions, and he was a universal scapegoat. Wherever he worked he was always being scolded and reprimanded by his superiors. His home-life was unhappy, but he was a decent fellow and did his work conscientiously. He never lost an opportunity of describing himself as a bad soldier.

"What is a good soldier?" he used to say. "A good soldier is simply a toady who flatters his superiors, bullies and browbeats his subordinates, and talks constantly of *esprit de corps*, but takes every opportunity of stabbing his colleagues in the back. But I'm not a good soldier. I'm a bad one! I'm a friend of my subordinates, a comrade to my colleagues, and a declared enemy of my superiors."

As a result his military career was very chequered. He had been on half-pay for a year as a result of a case against him which was quashed when the Popular Front came into power. His crime had been shouting: "Long live the Republic!" three times at a military celebration, and this under the Gil Robles-Lerroux Government. He had now been drafted to Madrid and imagined his troubles were over. He believed that, experience having made him a wiser man, he could now live in peace and wait for his promotion, which still, however, belonged to the distant future.

He came down to see me, and I told him what the typist had told me, and added that I thought her advice worth taking. I wanted to find out if he knew of any steps being taken to suppress the lawlessness of our military colleagues. The armed forces in Spain had always been hotbeds of lawlessness, but I thought it monstrous for murders to be planned within their ranks, or at any rate with their connivance. Although I had grown very sceptical as a result of the innumerable false rumours that were current, this murder campaign seemed a tragic reality, and it seemed madness to treat it in ostrich fashion and pretend it did not exist.

"What she told you is nothing to what I heard this morning, and what you can hear any day," the unlucky captain said. "You have only to come to my room. They do not even bother to go outside into the corridor any longer, but plot openly in the office. They say that poor Castillo was murdered by order of the 'Chief.'"

"Who? Gil Robles?"

"Heavens, no! Not Robles, but the 'Big Boss.' Robles doesn't count any longer. The 'Big Boss' is Calvo Sotelo. He didn't even give the order in secret. He demanded death for Castillo in a speech made openly in Parliament."

One of the Ministry clerks had overheard our conversation.

"If there is any honour left in Spain, Castillo must be avenged," he exclaimed. He was an ardent member of the Left, and indignation made him look like a man possessed. "And Calvo Sotelo must be the first to fall!" he added.

I cut him short. "Don't talk nonsense," I said.

"Don't be so vindictive," the captain added. "I want to live in peace in Madrid. If our people kill Calvo Sotelo, and then 'they' kill General Nuñez de Prado, for instance, where will it all end? Not even the Blessed Virgin will be safe!"

"Let us keep cool over this," I said. "We mustn't lose our heads. It's absurd to suppose that the Government doesn't realise what is happening, and it will certainly take drastic steps. The Government's patience must be exhausted by now, and it will deal firmly with these gentlemen, without too much red tape. It must do so, and it will do so, and it will have to do so quickly. Otherwise you won't be able to live in Madrid for long, quietly waiting for your promotion, captain, because they will take us all alive! And if they do, don't imagine it will be to put us on trial. All we'll get will be a firing-squad."

"So in your opinion one of two things has got to

happen," the captain remarked. "Either Civilón shows unheard-of energy and crushes these people, or they will shoot us. If that's the case, there's no hope. We're done for!"

"It's your own fault for being a Republican," I replied. "If you weren't a Republican, you wouldn't be in this position. Why did you ask for trouble by becoming a Republican?"

"Out of a pure spirit of contradiction, I suppose. I spent the first thirty years of my life in a Spain which was as restive as the bad bulls of Miura. Everything looked black and evil and lawless, and I cherished the illusion that if Spain became a Republic it would be transformed into a pleasant and civilised land. Besides, there seems to have been a curse over me all my life. All my life I've made things difficult for myself. Spain is now a Republic, but life is far easier for you if you're a monarchist than if you're a Republican. If you are a worker and vote for the Right, you find work. If you are a worker and vote for the Republic, they persecute you and let you starve. That is what it is to be a Republican! You know what happened to me. I had grown sick and tired of monarchist demonstrations, so one day, at a military banquet at the Llarache camp, I called out: 'Long live the Republic!' They promptly opened proceedings against me, because a sergeant in my company was related to a Socialist deputy who took part in the October rising. Don't laugh, I assure you that that is the truth. As I was on friendly terms with that sergeant, they said we were both Communists in the pay of Moscow. But for the Popular Front, I should never have convinced the judge that I don't even know what a Communist cell is. When the Right won the 1933 elections, they immediately reinstated the monarchical rebels of August 10¹ and

¹ General Sanjurjo's abortive rising against the Republic at Seville on 10 August 1932.

allowed them their arrears of pay. But I don't get any arrears, although my claim is better than theirs. I was not amnestied, but the case against me was quashed the day after the elections, and I know that the money is ready and waiting for me. All that is needed is the signing of the order to pay. This is usually given automatically, and there is no need whatever for any special authorisation. You know that there are quite a number of us in the same position. When we applied to the two Popular Front War Ministers, what do you think we were told? We were told to wait. Not only are they frightened of giving a written order, which in any case ought to be completely superfluous; they are actually terrified of giving verbal instructions to the Treasury to carry out the law in the ordinary course. They are afraid the reactionary monarchist Press will accuse them of favouritism towards their political friends. Meanwhile I don't get my pay, which I need for moving my family to Madrid."

On July 16, at half-past three in the afternoon, I had an appointment with a young lady of the Spanish aristocracy. I did not intend the flirtation to be adventurous, but circumstances made it so. She arrived punctually in her expensive American car, and we drove along the road towards Alcalá de Henares.

She had been detained by the police since Calvo Sotelo's¹ funeral, and she had been released only at noon that day. She and other aristocratic ladies had attended the ceremony at the grave-side. "Long live the Civil Guards!" she had shouted, after

¹ The Fascist leader, Calvo Sotelo, was assassinated in revenge for the assassination of Lieutenant Castillo. Assault Guards of the latter's company were responsible for the deed.

proclaiming in a loud voice that the latter were gentlemen and anti-Marxists; then she had gone up to the Assault Guards and shouted like a maniac: "Murderers! Marxists!"

I asked her how she had got on in prison. "Oh, I had a too, too marvellous time!" she said. "All the prisoners are Fascists at heart, and there are simply hundreds of them, so it was glorious! We even played poker. The prisoners were perfectly marvellous. Everyone of them was a gentleman, and they were all ready to give their lives for the cause. I didn't want my people to pay the five hundred pesetas fine. I didn't want to leave all those marvellous people!"

"I see. But why were you in such a hurry to see me?"

"You know perfectly well, you *canaille*! You know perfectly well that though you're only a filthy Republican, I'm mad about you. What I just told you was all lies. The hours I spent in prison seemed absolutely endless, because I didn't know what was happening to you. The other prisoners were marvellous, but the thought of you made me so miserable that I really felt I was in prison."

"Well, what do you want me to do about it?"

"Simply this. I want to save your life. Your life is in danger, and there's nothing in the world I care about but you. Let us both escape to France to-night. To-morrow may be too late. We can take the train to Irún to-night!"

She had made similar suggestions to me many times before, and I had always brushed them aside, telling her not to be a crazy little idiot. But this time I did not refuse her outright, because I wanted to get a little information from her first. We left the car about half a mile outside Madrid and walked into the fields. The heat was tropical, and there were no trees under which to shelter from the sun. So we sat down in a wheat-field, to enjoy the solitude and the fresh-

ness of the green wheat. I must confess that I found this young lady extremely attractive. She was extremely pretty, with all the charm of the typical Madrid *grisette*. Someone has said that in Spain, the land of paradox, the aristocracy imitate the people, even in the clothes they wear, though in every other country the reverse is the rule. But though I found this young lady somewhat dazzling, I wanted to find out what she had heard in gaol, and what she knew about the military rising, which I regarded as imminent and inevitable. My doubts, if I had any left, as well as those of most other Spaniards, had been removed by an article written by Indalecio Prieto after the funerals of Castillo and Calvo Sotelo. He had pointed out that the two Spains had confronted one another even at the cemetery, and that it would be idle to deny the imminence of civil war.

But the young woman went on trying to persuade me to elope with her that night.

"Everything is arranged," she said. "We both have passports. And you needn't worry about money, because you know I'm not hard up, and I transferred most of my money to London before the advent of the Republic. So there's no need to bother about that. I've ordered my maid to pack already. If you like we can go by road. We can be over the frontier to-morrow morning. If you don't listen to me, you're mad!"

"Just a minute," I replied. "Be a little more reasonable, please. And if you go on kissing me like that, you'll cause a spark and set the corn alight, even though it is green! Before you go on, tell me what you know."

"I can tell you nothing, nothing whatever. I can't be a traitor. But I don't want to lose you. Come along, hurry! . . . No, you don't love me, I can see it in your eyes. You won't listen to me. Don't you realise that if they kill you I'll die? Don't you know that I can't live without you? If you weren't a fool you'd realise that it's madness not to

listen to me ! I implore you on bended knees. This time it's you who are mad and I who am sane. Our rôles were bound to be reversed in the end. How awful it is for me to be sane now ! Are you such a fool as not to realise that neither the army nor the clergy, nor the Right, nor any decent Spaniard could possibly look on quietly and let the public forces, the Assault Guards, kill Calvo Sotelo, the only man who could have saved Spain ? ”

“ Now, listen, little girl, Spain must find her own salvation, and not expect it from people like Calvo Sotelo, who incidentally made a pretty mess of the job of Minister of Finance under Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. You are just like all the other Rights, maddened by the fear of losing your money. Otherwise you would be just as indignant at the Fascist attempt to assassinate Jimenez Asua, and at the murder of Pedregal, the judge who sentenced the would-be murderers to death. And you would be just as indignant at the murder of Castillo. You ought to condemn those crimes at least as much as I deplore and condemn the death of Calvo Sotelo. But you are blinded by your hate, and in your crass irresponsibility you would let loose the Flood itself—anything rather than be loyal to the Republic. You'll shed oceans of blood, mostly your own, and end by plunging Spain back to barbarism, and nothing but ruins will remain. Then you will have to work in order to live. You are just like bad losers at cards, who forget their manners, lose their self-control, and end by losing every penny they have. But enough of this. Give me one last kiss, and then we must go back to the car.”

We rose and walked back towards the car through the African landscape typical of that part of the neighbourhood of Madrid. The heat was torrid. She clung to my arm, almost embracing me, quivering and sobbing.

“ Don't leave me ! Don't leave me ! ” she kept imploring.

Walking along a narrow path, we saw two women in rags approaching us, surrounded by a rabble of children. They must have been inhabitants of the miserable hovels which are so numerous in that part of the country, and are a standing reproach to the Spanish social system. I could see that we would have trouble with them, so I led my companion aside to allow them to pass. "Look at the dirty Fascists!" they started calling out. "So they come here to make love, do they? They all ought to have their throats cut, every one of them! First they suck our blood, and then they come and insult us by making love under our noses. But not one of them shall live!"

My companion reacted just as I had feared. She flushed with fury and made as if to scratch both women's eyes out. I had to restrain her and put my hand over her mouth to stifle the curses she flung at the two women.

"*Canaille!*" she muttered, struggling in my arms. "*Canaille!* Vermin! Scum!" and so on and so forth. But I held her firmly and obliged her to walk on. But the small boys started throwing stones at us, and I was forced to reply by aiming a stone with all my strength at a rock near which the biggest boy was standing. That made them realise that I was not a dilettante whom they could stone with impunity, and that it might be dangerous for them to continue. They may have realised that I came from Avila, where stone-throwing is the favourite occupation of every schoolboy, and everyone is a real expert.

I hurried my companion away, and even obliged her to run. She was completely beside herself, and now she turned on me.

"You're just as bad as those vermin!" she exclaimed. "You don't love me! You only wanted me to betray my friends! Look at the fine gentleman who runs away instead of protecting a lady!"

"Stop your nonsense," I replied. "There are no

gentlemen or ladies here. There's only a woman who has always prided herself on her blue blood and now descends to the same level as the poorest and most ignorant. Where's your nobility now? What's the difference between you and those poor women? Is it that your clothes come from Paris? That's not much. I couldn't see any difference. And they have more excuse for their behaviour than you!"

We got into the car and drove straight back to Madrid. There was no more tenderness and passion in her eyes, but only hate. I suddenly made up my mind. At the Plaza de Toros-Monumental, near the Underground station, I said: "Stop!" Without saying another word, I got out and continued the journey by train.

I got out at Las Cibeles and went straight to the War Ministry, with my mind made up to warn them of the imminence of the insurrection. But on my way upstairs I reflected that I knew nothing concrete, nothing that everybody else did not know too, so I retraced my steps. I went to the Ateneo, to seek shelter from the heat, and spent a long time in the library. Later I went downstairs into the lounge.

There were more people there than was usual in the summer, and I took a seat in the midst of a group of Socialist followers of Caballero. The conversation drifted hither and thither in a somewhat desultory fashion, finally touching on the split within the Socialist party. *A propos* of this, somebody asked me:

"What will you Azañists do, now that Azaña is President? Will you join Prieto's reformists? Take care you don't get stoned at meetings, as Peña and Don Indalecio did when they tried to speak. When will the Liberal bourgeoisie realise that its day is over? Are you naïve enough to believe you can repeat

the first two years of the Republic? Why don't you come over to us, Martín, and join in making the Socialist revolution? What are you waiting for?"

"How can you say such things?" I replied. "What do you take me for? Do you imagine that I agree with *Claridad*? Don't you know that I don't even agree with Prieto's diagnosis when he says that you suffer from what Lenin called 'revolutionary infantilism'? What you suffer from is something far worse than that. Don't you realise that we are living on a volcano? Don't you see that they are going to take us all alive? That's something even a blind man could see. Do you know what Margarita Nelken said to some foreign friends of mine, who mentioned Prieto as a man capable of preventing the imminent insurrection? Her answer was: 'Anyone rather than Prieto, even Gil Robles.' Those were her very words."

"It's very nice of you to come and tell us these fairy-tales, Martín" somebody answered. "But you can sleep in peace, because there is nothing to fear. Things will happen when we want them to happen and not before, and meanwhile you can sleep in peace. Do you imagine that the non-commissioned officers and men are such nincompoops? If their officers dared to order them to fire on the proletariat, they would fire on their officers instead! Your fears are only shared by those afflicted with the bourgeois mentality."

"There you are, at it again!" I replied. "Bourgeois mentality, indeed! You and your mentalities! There is no such thing as a Fascist mentality or a bourgeois mentality or a Marxist mentality. There are only healthy minds and sick minds, minds capable of seeing reality and minds incapable of seeing reality. There are also people who have no minds whatsoever. But some of us see things as they are, and are not content simply to sit in the side-lines and boo

like discontented onlookers, and must somehow get our own back on those who have labelled their own mentality ' Marxist,' and think they can play ducks and drakes with reality. I shall therefore tell you what the reality is in the present case. When an officer in a barrack-square orders his men to fall in, they fall in. And if he then orders them to fire, they fire. I have heard that Azafía has several times said this in more or less the same terms. Therefore don't sleep too soundly, because you who claim to have the ' Marxist ' mentality have no right to sleep soundly while those of us who are too modest to claim any particular kind of mentality are consumed by anxiety night and day ! ”

I do not remember how I spent the time till seven o'clock on the following evening. No doubt I remained in the same fever of anxiety as on the previous few days. But from 7 p.m. on July 17 onwards, I remember every detail.

I went to the Ministry of Public Instruction, and while I was talking to the Minister's secretary, the Minister himself came out and asked me to come into his room and talk to him while he signed letters. He was a friend of my father's, and had been a master at my school and had helped me in my preparation for the Military Academy. I regarded him almost as a second father.

He complained that he, a Minister of the Spanish Republic, where everything remained to be done, had to spend whole afternoons signing answers to applications, none of which were ever granted. The answers were entirely uniform, and followed an unvarying formula. ' I have noted your application, and shall take every possible step to see what can be done,' etc. etc., or something to that effect. From time

to time he would dip into the pile of applications, pick one out, and read it. They concerned almost everything under the sun, and some of them were almost incredibly impudent.

"Will the Republic ever make our people understand that a Minister's first task is not to reward the Government's friends and persecute its enemies?" the Minister asked. "It stands to the Republic's credit that it has tried to make them understand. The reason why the reputation of the Republican leaders of 1873 stands so high, and why, in spite of their political failure, they founded such a powerful tradition, is their moral integrity. In those days the people, the peasants, had an even worse idea of the Government than they have now. Not only was the Government credited with distributing favours as it fancied, but it was believed that Ministers kept the public funds in a box in their office and distributed to their friends what they did not take for themselves. Thus we are faced with an uphill task. To raise the moral level of the country the people's horizon must be widened. For this there is only one recipe: schools, schools, and then again schools. Education is the only hope."

At half-past nine the Minister stopped his irritating and futile task. He suggested my joining him and his son for dinner at some tavern along the Corunna road. But the Minister of Transport telephoned, and he had to go and see him instead. We accompanied him in his car and waited for him till after ten o'clock. Then he sent a message, saying we should wait no longer, and that the driver should take us home.

When I got home I found my brother in a very agitated state. "There's no time for dinner," he said. "Get straight into uniform and go to the Presidential Palace at once!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

Zero Hour

THE taxi-driver who took me to the Palace could give me no clue to what was happening, but Major Menendez was waiting for me at the door and told me what little he knew about the military rising that had taken place in Morocco. He at once assembled the captains of the Presidential Battalion in the room of the general officer commanding the President's military establishment. The first problem was the defence of the Palace. The Presidential Battalion had neither men nor arms, but only officers and non-commissioned officers. We therefore decided to take over the command of the company of the First Regiment of Infantry which provided the Palace guard that day. We decided that if this company were relieved by another next day we would keep the men of both units at the Palace under our orders. We had no machine-guns, but a captain volunteered to fetch some from the Artillery Park in a lorry, and this he did.

"Does anybody know the captain commanding the guard? Is he reliable?" the commandant asked.

"We all know him. He's a dangerous Fascist."

"And his officers?"

"They are all poor devils who have risen from the ranks, but they are reactionaries, so we shall have to get rid of them," answered a captain who had served with the regiment in question.

"There's no time to lose," another captain added. "A company of Civil Guards has just arrived to reinforce the Palace guard, under the command of a captain I know, who took part in the rising in August 1932. The two captains must not be allowed to meet."

"The Civil Guards have not arrived at the Palace yet," somebody else announced.

The task was achieved admirably. Squads consisting of one sergeant and four men, with revolvers in their pockets, approached all the sentry-boxes simultaneously, while we, the major and several captains, held up the commander of the guard just as he stepped into the courtyard to find out why the sentries were being reinforced.

"Captain, I have to inform you that from this moment I am assuming responsibility for the command of the Palace guard," the major said.

"I am in command here, sir, and I cannot hand over to anybody," the captain replied.

"I am your superior and you have to obey my orders."

The captain stepped back and seized his revolver, but two policemen who were with us promptly overpowered him, and he found himself looking down the barrels of half a dozen revolvers. He very soon found himself on the way to police headquarters in one of the Palace cars.

His officers made no attempt at resistance, and gave the impression of being harmless family men rather than soldiers. They were taken to police headquarters in another car. One captain reminded the major that he ought to draw up a formal case against the captain. He had committed a military offence for which the penalty was death.

"Never mind about formalities, and note, once and for all, that the situation is very grave," the major dryly remarked.

"Very well, sir, but won't you tell us what you

know and not keep us in ignorance of what is going on ? ”

“ I know no more than you. But don't you realise that something grave is afoot when we have to arrest the captain and the officers of the Presidential Guard and send them to prison under a police escort, without even relieving them of their full-dress shakos, their white gloves and their swords ? Didn't you hear what I said when the policeman asked whether he should relieve the captain of his sword ? I told him that swords were of no use to us, and that that was the least of our worries.”

The Civil Guards offered a more difficult problem. It would have been ill-advised to have attempted to deal with them as we had dealt with the Palace guard, so we invited the officers over for a glass of beer and a chat. They accepted with alacrity, and we soon learned that they were ignorant of what was going on, and had no suspicions whatever. Realising this, the major hit on the expedient of splitting the company up into a number of posts, not in the Palace itself, but in the adjacent streets. Their own captain, sitting at a large table in the central courtyard of the Presidential Palace, gave the necessary orders. It wasn't for nothing that we sat with him and kept plying him with iced beer. Whenever the captain or any of his officers showed signs of wanting to inspect his men to see if all were in order, we managed to dissuade him by offering him another drink. Eventually the major feared that they might grow suspicious.

“ It's time to go to bed,” he announced. “ I've ordered beds to be brought here already, but first you must inspect the sentries, captain. Then you can go to bed, too. We'll let you know if anything happens.”

We were greatly comforted to see that, so far from having any objections, the captain was actually delighted to be accompanied on his round by five or

six of our officers. One of them stayed behind and showed us an enormous fully loaded automatic pistol he had in his pocket.

Six dismounted machine-guns arrived. They were promptly mounted and made ready for action. There were plenty of volunteers for this work, as well as for filling the sandbags. Everyone joined in indiscriminately, including civil servants, chauffeurs, policemen, officers, and men. We all worked as equals, though what we did was insignificant compared to what was being done elsewhere, and there was no occasion at the Palace for that miraculous heroism that has characterised Republican Spain from that moment to this.

For an hour we would be deeply pessimistic. For the next hour we would be buoyed up by an illusory optimism. Everything was uncertain, and all the news was contradictory. When we heard news from the Ministry of the Interior being announced on the wireless-set in some Minister's car, we all gathered round it to listen. But it left us just as ignorant as we were before. Somebody would plunge us into despair by telling us, for instance, that the navy had revolted, but a moment later somebody else would turn up and announce that the sailors had seized the ships and shot their officers. Thus we sat all night in the courtyard near the main gate, making the most fantastic conjectures.

Whenever a Minister, a general, or anybody else came in, somebody would propose approaching him and asking him what he knew.

"No," the senior captain would say, "we had better not ask this one. He looks as if he knew too much, and he would alarm us more than ever. Our hour of optimism isn't over yet. Let us wait ten more minutes. We must have equal doses of optimism and pessimism. As there is no reliable news any way, let us behave like children. I propose that instead of

seventy minutes of pessimism and fifty minutes of optimism, we reverse the proportions. If we keep our eyes open, and only tackle the kind of idiot who smiles whatever happens—fortunately they are not at all uncommon—and strictly ignore everyone who really seems to know something, we may even manage to remain optimistic all the time ! ”

The major went the round of the sentries at frequent intervals, and I went with him. Once he entered the President's apartments while I waited outside.

“ Did you see Azaña ? ” I asked him when he came out.

“ Yes. He is very downcast. He has always grieved for Spain. Imagine what he must be feeling now. He inspires more respect in his grief than ever. What a tragedy ! ”

Thus the first night passed. Its hours of anguish and tension were to be repeated and prolonged for how many more days and nights, and weeks and months. . . .

On July 18, at four o'clock in the afternoon, with an escort of four soldiers, I drove a presidential lorry to the arsenal of Retamares to fetch some munitions. The aspect of Madrid had already changed completely. Before reaching the Carabanchel road I was stopped repeatedly by patrols of Assault Guards and workers armed with revolvers and shot-guns, and had to explain who I was and where I was going.

At the arsenal there were the usual difficulties and delays, such as having to go to a distant village to ask the worthy local shopkeeper who was in charge of the arsenal for the keys, and then waiting for the chief of the military camp to arrive and give his authority. But eventually we succeeded in filling the lorry with

ammunition and hand-grenades. On the way back I was stopped near the Engineers' barracks by a recently established military post under the command of a lieutenant who turned out to be an old acquaintance.

Were these men friends or enemies? Were they rebels or not? I told my men I was suspicious, and ordered them to be ready to shoot.

The lieutenant greeted me warmly and offered me a cigarette. I remember that I nearly said to him: "Tell me, old man, are you a rebel or not?"

He asked me, politely but firmly, to wait for his battalion commander, who put me through a strange interrogation. He had obviously not yet made up his mind to come out openly as a rebel. I realised this, and that was why I did not immediately put my foot down hard on the accelerator.

"All right," the man said eventually. "The ammunition is obviously intended for the protection of the Presidential Palace, and it would be presumptuous for a modest officer such as myself to interfere with anyone engaged on such exalted business."

After that I did put my foot on the accelerator, but once more I was stopped and once more I was interrogated. This time it was by a band of armed workers. I told their leader that I had been stopped by the Engineers, and described how strangely they had behaved, and I added that they had given me the strong feeling that though they were not rebels yet, they very soon would be. The workers' leader said he was convinced they were on the rebels' side. The men had been confined to barracks for the last twenty-four hours, and no civilian had been allowed to enter, not even the man who always delivered the vegetables to the kitchen.

"If they didn't arrest or shoot you, as you were imprudent enough to go that way, it must be because they've got something else up their sleeve," he said.

"That battalion commander wouldn't have lived long to boast about it," one of my men interrupted. "I had this pointing at him all the time." Thereupon he produced an enormous Astra revolver. "My fingers are simply itching to shoot one of those Fascist officers," he went on, "and the higher his rank the better I shall be pleased."

At the Palace, hours of optimism and pessimism continued to alternate. We produced the former by deliberately deceiving ourselves. We already knew that the rising was general throughout Spain, but we found reasons for optimism everywhere. Thus we very much enjoyed hearing the voice of His Excellency General Queipo de Llano over the wireless from Seville. We all knew this personage. His coarse and brutal stupidity was more or less familiar to us all, and we all knew the way he spoke both before and after the advent of the Republic. In the course of arguments we had all heard reactionary officers producing their trump card.

"What generals are with you?" they would ask. "What generals are Republican? Only the duds whom nobody else wants—Lopez Ochoa and Queipo de Llano."

When they called Queipo de Llano a drunkard, an illiterate, an evil beast, and accused him of immorality, we could only hang our heads, and remain silent. Consequently it seemed absurd that a military insurrection could hope to be successful if this radio general played a prominent part in it.

As a curious detail I must mention that Major Menendez had advised us each to bring a suit of civilian clothes to the Palace, in order to avoid incidents when we were not on duty. The sight of a uniform was so loathsome to the public that we might easily have been taken for rebels when we went home to see our families. We all obeyed, and I am sure that I was not the only one to whom it occurred that mufti

might be a useful disguise with which to escape from the Palace in the event of a rebel victory.

When I discussed the situation alone with Menendez, we always agreed that things were going from bad to worse. Most of those we talked to naïvely believed that if only arms were handed out to the people everything would be all right. The civilians who came to the Palace were generally firmly convinced of this. Some even said that it was an act of treachery on the part of the Government not to hand out arms to all and sundry. That was the prevalent opinion in the streets. Menendez and I, who knew the real situation, had to shrug our shoulders and remain silent. If we were to give arms to the people, it was first necessary to have them. But of 65,000 rifles in the Artillery Park of Madrid, only 5000 had bolts and were therefore serviceable. The remaining 60,000 bolts were at the Montaña Barracks, where the Fascists had taken them in preparation for the rising. Five thousand had been returned to the Artillery Park owing to the personal initiative of its director, Don Rodrigo Gil, under the pretext of having them examined and greased. He had wanted to get them all back, explaining to the Ministry that at the Montaña Barracks they could only serve the designs of the enemies of the Republic. But the Ministry, under the control of Casares Quiroga, refused to issue the order for their return, and to get a few of them back Don Rodrigo Gil had been obliged to resort to the stratagem I have described.

The situation reached its climax on the morning when Prieto, after seeing the President, told us, with an expression full of sorrow, that our friend, Lieutenant-Colonel Carratalá, had been killed with all his escort in attempting to take over the command of the battalion of Engineers at Retamares. All the barracks in the Campamento had joined the rebels, too.

“What about the artillery?”

“ The artillery has gone over, too.”

We were all deeply discouraged. We expected the rebels to begin the bombardment of the Presidential Palace. Sometimes we thought we would have to take our civilian suits and fly. Had I not later lived through nights that were even worse, the name we called that night, to distinguish it from others, *la noche triste*,¹ would have been justified.

Sporadic firing could be heard all over Madrid. Sometimes there were whole volleys. Every Fascist was armed, and they spent the night shooting, as if by order. Moreover, the Presidential Palace is a magnificent sounding-board, so much so that shots fired in the neighbourhood sounded as if they had been fired in the Palace itself. When a door was slammed we all started, because it sounded like an explosion.

It is very difficult to tell by sound alone the exact spot from which a shot is fired. This fact is so little known that it can lead to tragic mistakes, and many have paid for it with their lives. More than once some poor devil has fallen a victim to the fury of an armed gang who killed him to avenge the death of some comrade, believing that they had distinctly heard the fatal shot fired from his flat, though it had really come from the other side of the road.

We heard revolver shots that seemed to be fired inside the Palace itself. Even we started believing there were Fascists in the Palace. And sure enough there were. Police and officers started a frantic search, and eventually a few relatives of some Palace servants, who had lived there since the days of the monarchy and were indeed Fascists, were arrested. But the mysterious firing went on, and guards outside the Palace were still occasionally killed. Every corner of the Palace was searched, and in the end the

¹ *La noche triste*, ‘ the sad night,’ was the name given to the night of Cortez’s retreat from Mexico City, when his rear was cut off, and the prisoners were sacrificed to their gods by the Aztecs.

major and I actually saw a guard killed by a revolver bullet. But he had been facing the Teatro Real, and was shot in the brow. The bullet could not, therefore, have been fired from the Palace. This settled our doubts, and we were able, not without difficulty, to persuade the others that no one was firing from inside the Palace.

But our sounding-board continued to multiply every sound. Somebody remarked that the last night of the royal family before King Alfonso's flight to Cartagena can hardly have been very peaceful, with the masses outside shouting: "Long live the Republic!" The effect must have been tremendous.

One journalist who had stayed with us, said that now he knew how resonant the Palace was, he could well understand what Amadeo¹ of Savoy must have gone through. Every night, as he attempted to sleep, the poor king had heard a mocking voice saying over and over again in a Madrid accent: "Listen! This house doesn't belong to you!" Finally he had left Madrid in disgust. "I never believed that story before," the journalist said, "but now I do believe it. Every newspaper-boy in the Plaza de Isabel II must be audible from here."

The door opened and shut and Ministers and other big-wigs came and went. We took this as a matter of course, and thus the ministerial crisis passed unnoticed.

An eight-cylinder Ford, differing in no way from all other eight-cylinder Fords, passed through the courtyard, and I ordered it to stop, in accordance with the instructions of a group that was waiting there, with General Masquelet, the President's chief of staff, in its midst. The car stopped, and the General

¹ Amadeo, an Italian prince, was King of Spain for a few months in 1871, during the first Spanish revolution. He soon abdicated, intimidated by repeated attempts upon his life and by the general disorder.

opened the door and spoke to those inside. During the conversation, which I did not hear, Don Manuel Azaña left the car and went to his apartments. The Ford and the many other official cars in the courtyard took shelter under the arcades, I don't know at whose orders. Now they will certainly start firing at the Palace, I said to myself.

At about seven o'clock next morning we interrupted our breakfast to listen to the wireless. We learned the names of the new Ministers with stupefaction, not only because we had not known that a change of government was impending, but because the new Government, with Martinez Barrios at its head, consisted only of Right Wing Republicans. Moreover, the Republicanism of some of them, e.g., General Castelló, was doubtful.

I was so astonished that I could not imagine what motives had prompted Azaña to do such a thing. I pestered Major Menendez with questions every time I saw him, but he would tell me nothing.

"Don't take it amiss if I tell you nothing, Martín," he said, "later on you'll understand for yourself."

But I returned to the charge.

"Don Manuel is not a rogue," I said, "so tell me what is going on behind the scenes, major."

"Don't be so obstinate, Martín, or you'll make me angry."

At nine o'clock Don Francisco Largo Caballero emerged from the President's office and was overwhelmed with questions by the journalists.

"There is no question of a Barrios Government," I heard him say. "A new Government has been formed, but it is constituted very differently. The Prime Minister is Giral."

I hurried to inform the major.

"One should always be discreet in life, but at the Palace it is a vital duty," he said. "Now you will understand why I refused to tell you anything this

morning. You were right when you said Don Manuel must have some powerful motive for forming such a Government, though others thought he had gone mad or turned traitor. In a country such as ours, where there is no patriotism, it is difficult to understand what the President was aiming at last night. Few things grieve him so much as this lack of patriotism, and the fact that he himself, who is a patriot through and through, has so often been insulted and called a bad Spaniard, simply because he prefers silent self-sacrifice for his country to spectacular sham-patriotism. I don't know whether he wanted to negotiate through Martinez Barrios, or what he wanted. But I know that he regards it as his first and most patriotic duty to put an end to this civil war—for you will realise that this is no longer a *pronunciamiento*, but an actual civil war. He believes that the greatest victory a politician or a general can achieve in a civil war is to put an end to it at all costs."

'The greatest merit of a general in civil war is to put an end to it.' Could there be a simpler or a finer idea? It made a profound impression on me, and since then I have often thought of its profound moral implications.

Thinking of Franco, commander of the largest army that Spain has ever seen, but a mediocre general and a little man, I have often wondered whether it was an idea that he could ever put into practice; or, since he is not a free agent, but the puppet of Italy, Germany, and his frivolous *entourage*, whether it was an idea that he could even appreciate. But, when I reflected on the Preparatory Military Academy, the Infantry Academy at Toledo, and the camps and barracks in Morocco in which this man was formed, I realised that it was impossible for him to understand it or to feel it. Nothing could change him, unless, in the words of the song, 'he were recast as one recasts a bell.'

CHAPTER NINE

' Storming the Bastille '

SLEEP, the infirmity of sleep, got the better of us. I tried to settle down on some historic divan, but the many noises of the building, in addition to my own excitement, would prevent me from sleeping. In the morning I fell asleep on a couch in the council chamber, immediately behind the chair in which King Alfonso used to preside at Cabinet meetings, and I did not wake up till the middle of the afternoon. I immediately asked for the latest news, but nobody paid any attention to me, because they were all too busy hunting for the *paco*¹ who was still killing the Palace sentries with his revolver. Men with field-glasses were posted at upper-story windows, and each of them was allotted a number of balconies opposite the Palace on which to keep a watch.

At about half-past six the balcony from which the shots were coming was discovered, and one Civil Guard and one Assault Guard, both champion marksmen, were told off to bring down the sniper when he appeared again.

Soon afterwards a group of Assault Guards came downstairs and passed through the main entrance.

"We've got him," they said. "We are going over to the flat. Will you come with us?"

A sergeant of the Assault Guards later told me in

¹ *Pacos* were Arab snipers who picked off Spanish troops on the march.

simple language what he had seen. The flat had been inhabited by the sniper, his wife, and their five young children. When the Guards entered they found the woman dead. She was stretched on the floor with a bullet in her head. The five children, weeping, were clinging to their father, who had a large-calibre revolver in his hand, and confessed that he was the sniper. The floor was littered with cartridge-cases. They took him to police headquarters.

“And what did you do with the children?”

“We found some neighbours who said they would look after them, and we arranged for the removal of the body.”

There was now no longer any doubt that every regiment of the Madrid garrison had revolted. It was known that General Fanjul was in the Montaña Barracks, where several hundred Fascists had joined him. The engineer officers of the Pardo Regiment had carried their men with them by shouting: “Long live the Republic!” and pretending that a Communist rising had taken place. They had seized a number of lorries and fled with them towards Segovia, eluding the Assault Guards who set out in lorries in pursuit. On the road they had met a group of gendarmes, whom they killed. News came in that they had passed through one village with their fists clenched in the Communist salute, shouting: “Long live the Republic!”

We were somewhat heartened by the absurdity of rebels trying to deceive their soldiers by clenched fists and shouts of ‘Long live the Republic!’

But a captain of the Presidential Battalion, who was killed three days later leading the first militiamen who went to the Sierra, would have none of this.

“Isn’t it fantastic for us to be so optimistic in a situation which gets worse every hour?” he said. “It’s an optimism nourished on absurdities. In Morocco, Franco, whose object is to destroy the

Republic, has issued a proclamation ending with the words 'Long live the Republic!' We think this so absurd that it can't possibly go very far; nevertheless the whole army of Morocco is in insurrection. We listen to Queipo's drunken voice proclaiming his brutal ineptitudes from Radio-Seville, and, as we know him, we believe an insurrection cannot possibly succeed with a man like that as one of its leaders. Nevertheless he is the absolute master of Seville, and kills off everybody who isn't undoubtedly on his side. And as for those engineers, they will soon join Mola, who is marching on Madrid at the head of those whose slogan is 'God, King, and Country!' ¹ and they will certainly not load their rifles with bonbons."

At two o'clock in the morning the same captain came back from the Artillery Park and told us what he had seen. He was enthusiastic about Lieutenant-Colonel Rodrigo Gil. He described him as an ideal officer, loyal to the Republic and the cause of the people. Five thousand rifles had been distributed there, and one 155 mm. and two 75 mm. guns and two 14-ton tanks had been prepared for an attack on the Montaña and the Campamento Barracks.

"Thousands and thousands were in the Park, waiting for arms," he said. "But our leaders prefer to let it be believed that they are unwilling to hand out arms to revealing that we have no more to hand out. They are desperately in need of officers, and it is absurd for us to be here instead of with the militiamen. Though I think it's again a case of the same kind of 'absurd' argument, I admit I have some hope, now that I have seen the whole people of Madrid asking for arms. We cannot lose!"

At four o'clock there was enough light to be able to observe the activities of the Fascists in the Montaña Barracks. We established an observation-post on the zinc roof of the north-east wing of the Palace, which

¹ The Carlists.

dominates the barracks and their surroundings. We could distinctly see the Fascists in the new uniforms they had taken from the regimental stores, and we watched them marching out to the parade ground. Sometimes groups of officers would appear, and some of them we thought we recognised. Nearer us, almost at our feet, in the Calle de Bailen and the Plaza de España, was a growing mob of people, armed with rifles, revolvers, and even with sticks. This was our army.

"The people are preparing to take the Bastille," a journalist solemnly announced.

Since that day the storming of the Montaña Barracks has often been compared to the storming of the Bastille.

"It is high time that the Spanish Bastille fell," the journalist continued. "The trouble is that in Spain it has to be stormed at least once every century."

The captain was disgusted that we were not leading the militiamen. "Fifteen officers have no business to be watching the bull-fight from the royal box, while the people are short of officers," he said.

I told Major Menendez that I disapproved of the phrase 'storming the Bastille.' I told him I thought realism even more important in war than in peace. Our objective was not the Bastille, but sixty thousand rifle-bolts in the Montaña Barracks which were essential for the formation of an army.

"Martín," the major replied, "you are the only person in the building who realises that we are not confronted with a *pronunciamento*, but a civil war. You know I am in absolute agreement with the essay you wrote two years ago, explaining that these are not the times of Carnot. Nowadays, with aeroplanes and machine-guns, a mob of ragged men armed with shot-guns, and crying out: 'Long live the Republic!' cannot hope to defeat a regular army. When we have finished with the Montaña Barracks, Martín,

you will go home, have a bath, and sleep till to-morrow morning. Then, instead of returning to the Palace, you will go to the Ministry, where we both have big things to do."

From our roof-top we could also see the Campamento, and the shells exploding near the Cuatro Vientos aerodrome, and aeroplanes circling and dropping bombs. Were they ours or theirs? We did not know. One machine flew over the Palace, and we thought it had come to bomb us, but it went on to the Montaña Barracks and dropped leaflets instead. We saw officers emerge from the barracks and pick up leaflets which fell on the parade-ground.

Finally, our two 'seventy-five' arrived and were unlimbered in the Plaza de España. They fired three shells each by way of greeting to the enemy. That proved that we had at any rate two excellent pieces of artillery. Up to that moment not a shot had been fired, but now the fusillade became general. From the barracks the crackle of machine-guns predominated.

I was disappointed to see how little effect the 'seventy-five' shells had on the solid barrack walls. Our gunners changed the position of their two guns every few moments, keeping out of sight of the enemy. We were told that they did so to make the rebels believe that we had more artillery than we really had; in fact, they were so skilful that even we had the impression that a much larger number of guns were firing. The aeroplane returned and bombed the barracks again and again. As soon as all its bombs were discharged it returned to the Cuatro Vientos aerodrome for more. It was clear that the pilots were with us. Other machines continually bombed the Campamento Barracks.

We were still deploring the inefficacy of the fire of the 'seventy-fives' when we suddenly saw 'the

people pushing the guns,'¹ or more precisely, our 155 mm. gun arriving on a lorry from the Mahou brewery, surrounded by a mob of civilians.

The fire of this big gun was quite a different proposition. Each shell worked tremendous havoc. At the same time the 'plane started dropping bombs of a heavier calibre, and it was obvious that the barracks would soon be untenable. It might hold out for minutes or hours, but there was no doubt that it would have to capitulate. The guns were skilfully handled, and every shell systematically hit its mark. The tower of the Church of the Carmelites, which formed part of the barracks, was destroyed by two well-aimed rounds from one of the 'seventy-fives.' We had seen rebels firing at the militiamen from this tower. These rebels were not soldiers, but monks. If we had not seen them with our own eyes we should never have believed it.

At about ten o'clock, white handkerchiefs on bayonet-points appeared at the windows of the south-eastern frontage of the barracks. A feeling of enormous relief swept over the multitude, not only because they believed they had triumphed, but because it seemed a symbol of peace, presaging the end of the fratricidal struggle.

For a moment fire ceased. The masses surged forward, but were met by a withering fire from mortars and machine-guns, and in a second all the eastern approaches to the barracks were strewn with dead and wounded. A shell from a mortar blew up a lorry full of Assault Guards. Hitherto the rebels had not fired at the Palace, but now several machine-gun bursts traversed it, without, however, causing any casualties.

A cry of rage swept over the crowd, and the fusillade was resumed more vigorously than ever.

The multitude did not understand what had happened, though it was simple enough, and not the

¹ An allusion to the storming of the Bastille.

dastardly stratagem for which they had taken it. A number of soldiers had refused to obey their officers, had taken refuge in the south-east wing of the barracks and had raised the white flag.

The bombardment that began now made the previous firing seem desultory. It continued without abating until about seven o'clock, when white flags appeared at most of the windows and the mob surged in.

My fear that the people, who had seen red, would shoot the officers, was fulfilled. We saw through our field-glasses how some of them were dispatched on the spot. However, when I saw General Fanjul emerge under the escort of some Assault Guards, I hoped for a moment that they would not all be massacred, but that the survivors would be held for trial according to law. But my hope did not last long. With the exception of the group taken away with General Fanjul, all the officers were killed on the spot, except a few who committed suicide in the barrack hall.

Several friends of mine were among the dead. One of them, Major Azcáraga, of the artillery, was a model officer, intelligent, honourable, and absolutely loyal to the Republic. He had been assigned to the infantry regiment quartered in the barracks, and when the rebellion began it had been impossible for him to get away. He was a first-class gunner, and his services would have been invaluable to the Republic.

At the Campamento the people, with the help of the bombers, had also triumphed. All the barracks had been captured, and the people were fraternising with the soldiers. Nearly all the officers were shot there, too.

We descended from our roof-top in high spirits and joined the enthusiastic crowd.

Immediately outside the Palace gates I saw an incident I shall never forget. A boy, about nine or

ten years old, who reminded me of one of my own boys, came dashing down the street, brandishing an enormous revolver, which he pointed at everyone who tried to stop him. "Murderers!" he shouted. "They are killing my father! *Canaille!* Father, I shall avenge you! Murderers! Cowards! *Canaille!*" Some Guards took aim at him, but we ordered them energetically not to shoot, and the boy ran all the way to the barracks, brandishing his revolver, without its being possible to stop him.

Some women who had tried to calm him told us that the boy's father had been a captain serving in the Montaña Barracks. He had belonged neither to the Right nor to the Left, but the rebels had kept him in the barracks like everybody else. The boy had heard people saying they would kill all the officers in the barracks, and had seized a revolver belonging to his father and ran out of the house, and his mother and the neighbours had been unable to stop him.

Dejectedly I returned to the Palace. I knew that this was the beginning and not the end of the most cruel and bloodthirsty civil war in history.

All the rebel arms, munitions, and supplies fell into the hands of those who entered the barracks first. Any amount of civilians appeared with cartridge belts, rifles, and tin hats. Some of them appeared in uniform, with almost complete equipment.

One rough-looking customer turned up at the Palace gates in full war kit, complete with rifle and tin hat, and asked to be received by the President of the Republic, because, he said, he had shot the colonel of the Engineers. Fortunately there was no difficulty in convincing him that the President was engaged at an important meeting.

"Poor Don Manuel," I remarked to a friend. "What an ordeal this must be for him."

"You're an officer," he replied, "and naturally you can't help regretting the death of your fellow-officers,

although they wouldn't have had a moment's hesitation in shooting you."

"No, it isn't that. But I have a peculiar idea. It's almost an obsession. I believe that shooting people solves nothing. Killing is essentially a sterile act, and it never settles anything ; and I am convinced that if the Republic does not allow itself to degenerate into the Fascist habit of shooting and killing, it will gain enormously in moral prestige and be more invincible than ever. Sentimentalism and morality apart, killing does not pay."

I remember that the major was not in the least surprised at my objecting to obey his orders to go home and sleep. He found it quite natural that I should find it a wrench to leave those who had been my comrades during those anxious but historic days. To stay at home and miss the spirit of fellowship that had grown up in the Palace, to be deprived of hearing the latest news from minute to minute and my friends' comments on it—all this was an alarming prospect. On top of it I was afraid that I might not be able to sleep. But I was forced to admit that my services in the Palace were entirely superfluous.

That evening, after dinner, the officers were invited to take coffee with the President. In spite of the friendliness and simplicity with which both he and his wife talked to us, I did not have the impression that I was the guest of Don Manuel Azaña, but of the President of the Spanish Republic. Don Manuel Azaña, more Spanish than any of the previous tenants of the Palace, fulfilled his functions with dignity.

The reception lasted about two hours. The President sat at a writing-desk, with almost the whole personnel of the Palace either standing or sitting around him. He looked neither happy nor dejected, but

made a number of witty remarks in the course of the conversation.

It had been a good day. Some of those present expressed optimistic opinions, generally based on some 'absurdity.' The storming of the Montaña and Carabanchel Barracks was discussed. I began to be impressed with these arguments based on 'absurdities,' since even Don Manuel Azaña used them in commenting on the fact that for lack of Spaniards the rebels were resorting to the Moors. He was pleased with the news that the people of Algeciras had annihilated some Moorish troops who had come from Ceuta.

CHAPTER TEN

Birth of the Militia

I WENT home and slept for twenty hours. Then I changed into mufti and went by Underground to the Ministry of War. At the door I stopped, not knowing which department to go to, when someone hailed me. It was Lieutenant Lopez Mejias, of the Presidential Battalion.

"Hullo, Martín, where are you going to?" he said. "We have been waiting for you. You are not going to be attached to the secretariat after all. We have arranged with Menendez for you to join us in the militia department. Where do you live, by the way? We have been sending messenger after messenger for you. I'm acting as adjutant to Major Barceló, and we have been organising a headquarters for the militia, in order to build up the new People's Army. We need you badly. Come along, and I'll introduce you to the major."

Lieutenant Mejias told me what had happened to the Presidential Battalion.

"The senior captain has taken over command," he said. "All the other officers have been posted to the militia and have gone to the Sierra. The exodus began after the President's reception, soon after you left, and there's not one of us left at the Palace."

That was how my work in the militia department began.

We had been allotted the former office of the infantry department, the entrance to which was in the Calle del Barquillo. The room of the former head of the department had been transformed into a general office. It contained a large table, on which there were six telephones. The only other furniture was six chairs and two big, comfortable armchairs. A concealed door led to a small room containing a bed. A barred window, ten feet above the Calle del Barquillo, provided a little ventilation. A number of fans were fixed to the wall and irritated us with their perpetual noise.

The head of the department was Major Barceló, who had been Casares Quiroga's aide-de-camp and had clearly foreseen the insurrection. A month before the outbreak he had taken command of the infantry detachment attached to the Ministry, and replaced all the reactionary officers by loyal Republicans. As a result this detachment was the only one that remained loyal to the Government. But for Major Barceló, the War Ministry might easily have fallen into the hands of the rebels. He had been assisted by Captain Diaz Tintero, of the same detachment, who had likewise clearly foreseen the approaching catastrophe and, on his own initiative, had founded the UMA (Military Union of Anti-Fascists), a secret organisation intended to combat the secret activities of the UME (Spanish Military Union). The latter, however, had quite openly prepared for the insurrection. Unfortunately the rapidity of events and lack of support from above had prevented Tintero's organisation from fulfilling the hopes that were had of it.

Tintero was now in command of the infantry detachment, and was also in charge of the newly-created Control Department, the object of which was to classify the whole army as loyal, indifferent, or Fascist. He had risen from the ranks, after spending his youth in an ecclesiastical seminary. He was

middle-aged, with grey hair, and possessed the intransigence of a Jacobin. Like all intelligent officers who had risen from the ranks, he was an embittered man. Were it not rather absurd to compare a middle-aged Spanish Army captain to Robespierre, I might have said that he resembled the Seagreen Incorruptible.

There were two more captains in the department, Galán, who was lame as a result of a wound, and Cojo, an artilleryman and an old acquaintance of mine from the Ateneo. There was also Lieutenant Ciutat, of the infantry, who had been a pupil of the Military High School and later became chief of staff of the Army of the North. There were also two young men whom I did not know.

I had no idea yet what work I was going to do myself, and I was surprised at the confidence and energy which these two young men displayed while giving out crisp and intelligent orders over the telephone. For a moment I thought they must be two captains from the General Staff, and I was greatly impressed with their efficiency. I was very surprised when I discovered that one of them, Diaz, was a doctor who had only just qualified, while the other was either a lawyer or a classical scholar, I forget which. This made me admire them more than ever. The latter had been president of the FUE (Spanish University Federation), a students' organisation which had played an important rôle in the fall both of the monarchy and of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship.

The office was an inferno, not only because of the stifling heat and the incessant ringing of the six telephones, but mainly on account of the people of all sorts who were everlastingly coming in and going out.

They all wanted something. First of all they wanted arms and ammunition. After the *bona fides* of every applicant had been rigorously checked, arms were allotted them through the various political parties and organisations. The sixty thousand rifles, with the

bolts recovered from the Montaña Barracks, were distributed in this way.

An enormous queue of applicants with chits waiting for signature formed in the street outside. The first arrivals clambered up to the windows and expressed their impatience in no uncertain terms. The signing of chits went on incessantly from five o'clock in the morning until eleven or twelve o'clock at night.

"Well, comrade, what do you want?"

"Sign this for me, comrade, please, so that I can get two thousand packets of tobacco for the militia at Chamartin."

"But how many of you are there, and what are you doing at Chamartin?"

Generally the answers we were given would be quite fantastic, and we would put an end to the matter by granting, say, a hundred small packets, adding that next day no chits would be signed unless the number of rifles was stated with each application.

Tobacco, meat, eatables of all sorts, and the most unlikely things such as wireless sets, fountain pens, watches, typewriters, clothing, etc., could be obtained with these chits. With the Ministry stamp on them they were accepted as currency by every shop, and by the Commissariat. Nothing so anarchical had ever happened before, even in anarchical Spain. I felt exasperated at being the instrument of such extravagance, and was grieved to find nobody at the Ministry who, so far from appreciating its seriousness, even bothered about it.

Sometimes when I was too exhausted to continue, I would move an armchair over to the window and talk to the militiamen. Militiamen were always clinging to the window-rails. They always had their rifles over their shoulders, and some of them even went on fondling their revolvers.

Some of the requests reached the height of absurdity. One group of Anarcho-Syndicalist militia-girls asked

for four hundred brassières. Naturally there was an argument about this, and rifles and revolvers were pointed at me. But someone from the inner office called out: "Stamp their chit and tell them to clear out!"

I must say here that at that time I had a profound antipathy to all the Spanish Communists, particularly the Communists of the drawing-room variety. We who were Republicans because we believed that Republicanism could save Spain from her age-long anarchy and bring about the real revolution, at last establishing justice in the land, could not but deplore the incessant disturbances caused by the Communists, together with the Anarchists, to the great detriment of the Republican régime. We knew that the reactionaries had not vanished over-night, and believed that it was the trouble-making revolutionaries who were responsible for the failure of the Constituent Assembly. With the class-struggle as their banner and armed risings as their tactics, the Communists lost no opportunity of promoting their aims by means of violence, and, though they were a small minority, they continually attempted to impose themselves upon the country at large. Thus, in spite of their limited numbers, they constituted the greatest single obstacle to the pacification of the country, which was the essential postulate for the survival of the young régime. Strikes broke out everywhere on the flimsiest pretext, and their revolutionary nature caused general alarm.

Incessant Communist agitation deprived the Government of the support of the property-owning classes, however Liberal sections of the latter may have been, for they were convinced that the Government was the Communists' accomplice.

The mentality of the Communist leaders, although they did not suspect it, was Trotskyist, being based upon the principle of the Permanent Revolution, and therefore out-of-date. Long after the Comintern had

abandoned its disastrous policy of constantly denouncing British and French Imperialism, the Spanish Communists were still marking all the white walls of Spain with fantastic slogans such as 'Death to Herriot!' and 'Down with Imperialist War!'

Had they been more intelligent, they would have realised that Litvinov's 1934 slogan: 'Anti-Fascist defence instead of the revolutionary offensive,' was far more vital in Spain than in any other country. It must, however, be granted that if the Spanish Communists did not recognise the truth of this until Litvinov proclaimed it, they at least carried it out to the letter after the formation of the Popular Front in 1936.

After this digression, let me explain how my antipathy to the Communists was transformed into sympathy.

Whenever a chit was presented demanding quantities of less than three figures, it always turned out to come from a Communist group.

"How many rifles have you?"

"Forty-three, comrade. That's why we made the chit out for eighty-six packets of tobacco, so that we shan't have to bother you again to-morrow. Would you like to see our list of members and what work we are doing?"

Whenever I started arguing with some militiaman who wanted, say, five wireless sets, two sewing machines, eight typewriters, and a vast quantity of rations, and someone stepped out of the queue and supported me, he was sure to be a Communist. There could be no mistake about that.

I found nothing so discouraging as the general lack of comprehension of the disastrous effects of such anarchy. Madrid was being pillaged. Within a few days many shops had nothing left on their shelves. Sometimes goods were coolly taken from the shops by militiamen without any authorisation whatever.

It was true that I was supposed to check the chits, but the checking was inevitably more nominal than real.

What aggravated the situation to my mind was the fact that many thousands (mostly belonging to the CNT, the Anarchist trade union organisation) of those who had managed to seize a rifle or a revolver in the storming of the barracks now spent their days going from café to café and restaurant to restaurant, eating and drinking without paying.

The Cabinet published a decree which caused me still greater consternation. It ordered employers to continue paying wages to workers who had taken up arms in defence of the Republic. I found this decree indefensible for two main reasons. In the first place it proved that the Government had not yet realised that this was not a *pronunciamento*, but a civil war. In the second place, even with the best intentions in the world, the employers could not possibly comply with it, even for a few days. The Government must have been perfectly well aware of this. Moreover, it meant the ruin of the trade of Madrid, and worse still, it would hamper the transformation of the militia into a regular army.

But I was determined to struggle against all difficulties, above all, the general incomprehension of the situation. Thus, on the second night of my work in this department, I took advantage of a relatively quiet moment, and with the help of Captain Rodriguez Sastre of the Commissariat department, who immediately saw the point of what I was doing, drafted two decrees, the texts of which were published in the Ministry gazette of August 13.

The first of these ordered immediate payment to be made on all chits stamped by the Ministry, and their immediate cancellation. The effect of this, however, was practically nil, because by the time the decree was published all the shopkeepers of Madrid were already

ruined. My intention had been to prevent a complete breakdown of trade. I had wanted to prevent the circulation of goods from ceasing completely by giving traders a supply of ready cash. Goods would have continued to enter Madrid, though the normal flow would, of course, have been greatly diminished.

The second decree entitled every militiaman to pay of ten pesetas a day. If they were killed it would continue as a pension for their families, and if they were missing or wounded they would still be entitled to it.

My reasons for drafting this decree were simple. Most of the militiamen were married, and the families of men who were risking their lives at the front had to be prevented from begging for alms in the streets of Madrid. This had already happened. Moreover, if the men were given regular pay no more chits would have to be issued. Last but not least, it would turn the militiamen into soldiers, because those who refused to accept discipline would get no pay.

We had a large number of copies of this proposed decree typed, and I distributed them as widely as possible, with a long preamble, explaining why it should be put into effect immediately. Whenever I had an opportunity of talking to a Minister, I slipped a copy under his nose, as if it were a prospectus. Whenever an influential member of any of the political parties came to the office, I did the same, and gave him some extra copies, hoping he might distribute them. I also gave copies to all the officers of high rank whom I met.

Unfortunately nobody took any interest in it. All attention was focused upon the problems of the immediate moment. I therefore intensified my propaganda, but was only laughed at for my pains. Once when I entered the offices of the embryo General Staff, a captain called out: "Help! Help! Here comes Martín Blázquez looking for an audience for his great ideas!"

I was replaced at the militia office by some lieutenants of the embryo Train Corps. When the insurrection broke out the Train Corps had practically its full quota of officers. All it lacked was men and materials. I slept where I could. For some time I had kept a loaded revolver in my pocket.

The nights were terrible. We generally spent them appealing to the political parties to let us have armed men to relieve the pressure on one or other of the fronts, from which desperate appeals kept pouring in. We also had to provide against the possibility of risings by the Civil Guards. Although they had rendered excellent services to the Government at the outset, we had reason to believe they were no longer reliable. Twice at night we had to leave everything, take command of the recruits and surround Civil Guard barracks. Fortunately, they never actually rose, and eventually they allowed themselves to be disarmed without resistance.

The streets of Madrid swarmed with militiamen promenading with rifles, but when we needed them very few presented themselves. I always used the same refrain. "What do you mean by saying that there are only twenty of you when you drew a thousand rations of bread only this morning?" I must, however, give the Communists their due. If they had no armed men, they improvised them, heaven knows how, and always gave us effective aid.

When possible I spent the time between four and six in the morning at the offices of the embryo General Staff, helping the supplies department, or examining the military situation with Captain Rodriguez and Lieutenant-Colonels Lacal and Palazuelos.

An efficient supply department was vital to us, yet complete anarchy reigned here, too. The effectiveness of all our plans depended less on our will than on the availability of our resources. Nevertheless, in spite of the apparently overwhelming obstacles, we were

determined to produce order out of the prevailing chaos. We were confident that we could produce the necessary organisation and discipline in the end. In the meantime everything was lacking. A serious problem was provided by the spontaneous activity of individual political units and groups, who had formed their own independent supply committees and sometimes succeeded in providing for the needs of the moment, though hampering the progress of large-scale organisation. But the greatest problem was the lack of means of transport. Though thousands of lorries had been requisitioned, lorries were never available when we had a convoy ready to go to the front.

On the whole the problem of the feeding of the troops was one of those which were most effectively solved. It was, of course, a vital one, since the workers who were fighting for the Republic could not be left with empty stomachs. Nevertheless complaints and protests arose, and to put an end to them it occurred to me to seek an interview with Largo Caballero. I mentioned the matter to Baraibar, editor of *Claridad* and one of Caballero's advisers, who was later to be Under-Secretary for War. To my surprise I discovered that he had the same preoccupations as I.

The interview took place at the office of the UGT, whose general secretary Largo Caballero was.

I confess that I felt somewhat alarmed at the prospect of meeting Largo Caballero, 'whose eyes, like those of Philip II, make your blood run cold.'

The first thing that struck me as absurd was that he should be wearing a *mono*, the new militia uniform. I saw no reason why he should not be wearing his ordinary clothes.

I don't know whether his presence is really intimidating or whether I merely entered the room with a preconception, having been told of the effect he had on people so many times in the past. But I found

myself instinctively taking up the same attitude as when I had talked to generals such as Mola in the days of the monarchy.

Caballero started by telling me that it was a disgrace that we officers had not yet solved the problem of provisioning the troops. If the workers who were fighting at the front were ever again left without food, he was determined to order them to withdraw from the struggle and return to their homes, because he had had enough of it, he said.

Feeling that I was being treated as more of a subordinate than at any time during my military career, I pointed out as discreetly as possible that the very least of the consequences of such an action would be that both he and I would be shot by the Fascists. I explained that only a handful of professional soldiers were left at the Ministry, and that even in war under normal conditions, with the transport and other services functioning perfectly, and everyone, from the generals at the top to the drummer-boys at the bottom, faithfully obeying orders, the problem of supply was an extremely difficult one for any general staff. I pointed out that in the existing circumstances it was not only difficult for the supply service to function properly; it was actually impossible. I added that my co-operation in the work of this department was voluntary and spontaneous, because my main work lay with the militia. I had, however, devoted myself to the problem of supply because I knew how vital it was. Moreover, I added that I had not come to hear his criticisms of the few soldiers who had remained loyal to the Republic, but in order to enlist his invaluable co-operation and support.

"And what do you want me to do?" he asked. "How can you expect me to solve a problem which is too much for you?"

I replied that in my opinion some of the most popular Socialist deputies should be assigned to the

Commissariat, and that one of them should go to the Sierra. There, in addition to supervising distribution, he should see to it that supplies were not stupidly wasted while militiamen went hungry in the front line, as had occasionally happened ; and that there should be no starvation among the troops while ten rations per man per day were being sent out.

He agreed, made a few telephone calls, and immediately drew up a list of nominees.

The Socialist deputies proved to be invaluable, and I shall never forget the enthusiasm they put into the work. I wish particularly to mention the energy of the deputy for Madrid, Señor Carlos Larrubiera.

I returned to the Ministry by car, pleased at having achieved my aim, but with a pitiful impression of the 'Spanish Lenin.' The resentment I had harboured against him for many months, as the man who had resurrected Carlism, was rekindled. I was haunted for hours afterwards by the words of a convinced Republican and shrewd observer who, criticising Caballero's brand of revolutionary Socialism as stupid, impolitic, and out of date, observed : "A day will come when he will be recognised as the man who has done more harm to Spain than anyone since Philip II."

I was equally worried by the problem of transport. I have already mentioned that in spite of the thousands of commandeered cars which filled the streets, there were never so many as half a dozen available for sending convoys to the front punctually. Obtaining lorries was a continual struggle.

Whenever an urgent demand for reinforcements came from the front, by the time we had raised the necessary men, the lorries were invariably missing. We would often spend a whole night assembling a

battalion, only to find there were no lorries to take it to the front. Sometimes, when the lorries turned up after fourteen or sixteen hours' delay, we found that the militiamen had grown tired of waiting and had dispersed.

A Road Transport Committee had been formed, on a trade-union basis, for the purpose of organising transport to the front line. We were often very rude to the members of this committee when they failed to meet our demands. But it was inevitable that they should fail to meet our demands, because the organisation was chaotic and anarchical and quite unfit for its task under war conditions.

During the previous eight years I had written many articles on this subject in the military reviews, some of them dealing specifically with the problem of the mobilisation of transport in time of war. Among other things, I had naturally advocated its complete militarisation. I mention this the better to illustrate my alarm and dismay at the appalling fashion in which a factor of such vital importance was mis-managed.

To understand how it was possible for the responsibility for such a vital service to be in the hands of a few gentlemen sitting in an office and going by the pompous name of 'National Road Transport Committee' one must bear in mind (a) the prevalent state of chaos, (b) the characteristically Spanish lack of care for the morrow, (c) the widespread conviction that enthusiasm and spontaneous popular co-operation would work miracles. In the last resort the phenomenon was made possible by the two things that were at the source of all our troubles: ignorance and unpreparedness.

Inevitably the drivers did not obey the committee's orders, and lorries were used at random for purposes entirely foreign to the war. A convoy of forty or fifty lorries never returned complete; some lorries re-

mained at the front, others were scattered among the hundreds of absurd committees which sprang up all over the place.

All the officers of the Train Corps who were assigned to the militia department and helped us in thousands of difficulties agreed that the height of their ambition was to form lorry transport battalions. This increased my anxiety to find a solution to the problem. On July 26 I completed the first draft of a proposed decree to deal with the matter. It provided for the formation of *cadres* and for every detail of administration. The greatest difficulty we were up against was the lack of discipline, but I proposed solving this by a simple expedient, i.e. by announcing that any driver who declined to serve in a car transport battalion would get no pay. In the preamble I outlined a few elementary considerations, though with very little hope that anybody would take any notice of them. I pointed out, for example, that you cannot fight a properly organised army unless you have a properly organised army yourself. I also pointed out that in modern war the motor-transport service is as important a weapon as the artillery, the air force, or any other arm, and that a hundred military lorries with their full equipment of officers and men are far more effective than two hundred lorries at the beck and call of a few trade unionists who let you have them as a favour, etc. etc.

I had copies of this document cyclostyled and started distributing them. I discovered that strong interests were opposed to my proposals, but nevertheless I continued with my efforts. Whenever I heard despairing complaints at the Ministry about the lorry shortage, I left a number of copies as my answer. At last, on 1 February 1937, when I returned to Valencia from Paris, General Asensio, then Under-Secretary for War, proudly showed me the official gazette of January 26 containing a decree relating to the militarisation of motor transport. I expressed my pleasure that the

problem had finally been solved, and that entirely on the lines I had indicated in July. "Who knows whether your draft did not serve us as a guide?" he answered.

Many critical moments of my service in the militia department I have forgotten, but there are a number that I remember, though they are probably not the most interesting.

One day who should enter but Don Casares Quiroga, at a moment when I was busy talking on the telephone, and at the same time giving orders and demanding that full facilities be given to the Railway Militia for the construction of an armoured train. The political destiny of Spain was no longer in Quiroga's hands, as he had been relieved of the premiership only a few days earlier. He now assiduously devoted himself to the task of selecting a rifle from a pile standing in a corner. Having found one entirely to his satisfaction, he took his departure, announcing that he was going to the Sierra to join the staff of Colonel Asensio.

I also remember seeing a crowd of officers waiting outside the Ministry doors. They had all applied for permission to serve the Republic, and the tragedy of their situation was painted on their faces. The majority were non-political, but many were out-and-out reactionaries. They knew only too well that if their services were rejected their lives would be in danger. An 'F' (for Fascist) put beside a man's name was often equivalent to a death sentence. Who were their executioners? Who were the murderers who took them from their homes, shot them, and left their bodies in the fields? At the Ministry the killers were described as themselves enemies of the Republic.

I avoided passing through the main door, and if some old friend or acquaintance attempted to greet me I ignored him, for obvious reasons, of which the first was that I could do nothing for him. But I read in their eyes that they credited me with great influence,

and that they believed that the reason why I did nothing for them was that as a good revolutionary I was cheerfully leaving them to their fate. Both suppositions were entirely false. I never gave any information about them when I was asked for it, though I realised that in this I was failing in my duty.

A man of about forty, well dressed, tall and distinguished-looking, and rather resembling a Protestant pastor, spent a lot of time in our office. I never discovered his name or his business. I suppose I thought he might be a friend of Barceló, and later regretted not having asked him. No doubt he would have replied : " Oh, I thought he was a friend of yours ! "

This man always had surplus supplies of tobacco ready when anybody wanted some, always answered the telephone when everybody else was engaged, and fetched beer or coffee when we wanted it. One morning, shortly before I left the department, while I was talking on two telephones at once, with a group of militiamen waiting for me to present their usual requests, I heard him saying, quite casually and unconcernedly, that he had killed six monks. He had found them hiding in the cellar of a bookshop in the Calle del Prado and had killed them in the Casa del Campo. I was paying no attention to the man at the time, my attention being fully engaged elsewhere, and I wondered whether I had heard him correctly. But on thinking it over afterwards I had no doubt. These were the six monks who had fired at the people from the church-tower in the Montaña Barracks.

On my last evening in the department, when I was similarly engaged, I heard the expression *pasear* (' to take for a ride ') for the first time. A group of militiamen described how they had killed a captain who had been a personal friend of mine. He was far from being a reactionary, and the motive for the crime was personal vengeance.

After so many hours of anxiety and tension, what

with lack of sleep, nervous tension, and the fantastic things which were happening all round me, I had lost all sensibility. The fact that nobody showed any sign of being aware that I ever overheard the stories of such crimes gave me a curious sense of relief, seeming to absolve me of all complicity. Moreover, personal intervention on my part would have availed nothing. In what sense could it be said that I was a party to these crimes? The damage they did to the Republic grieved me more than the crimes themselves.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Organising a War Ministry

I WAS very pleased to be transferred to the technical secretariat.

True, in the militia department I had lived through some sublime moments. I feel incapable of paying their due to the people of Madrid. They had outgrown their childishness and attained maturity at last. Their achievements were magnificent. The office overlooking the Calle del Barquillo was the pulse and nerve-centre of their activities in those early days, and there could have been no better or more thrilling observation-post. When I said farewell to the companions with whom I had shared those hours, we all had tears in our eyes, tears not of regret at parting, but of emotion caused by the recollection of the thrilling hours we had spent co-operating with the people of Madrid.

The Minister of War was General Castelló. As military governor of Badajoz, he had been instrumental in keeping the garrison loyal to the Republic. That was why he was appointed to the Cabinet.

I was astonished to discover that he had completely lost his grip and was incapable of carrying out his duties. All he did was to sit in an easy chair and sign the papers that were submitted to him. All his will-power had gone. Throughout those undisciplined days the Minister's functions were carried out by Lieutenant-Colonel Saravia and Major Menendez. It was they who had asked for my transfer.

Menendez took advantage of a moment when he was not chained to the telephone to tell me that I would not remain in the technical secretariat, but would work with them. As I had pleaded so ardently that before an army could be created the necessary organisation must be established, I was to be given the task of reorganising the Under-Secretariat.

I replied that the occasion makes the man. Give me half a dozen men, I said, and I would do it. But I pointed out that the organisation of an army at war needs a bigger and better personnel than an army in peace-time. Even with half a dozen geniuses I should not be able to use up as much paper and ink as the four hundred brass-hats of all ranks who had formed the Under-Secretariat of pre-insurrectionary days.

I found a magnificent assistant in the person of Lieutenant José Ortiz, a man of extraordinary gifts and an ardent Republican. The first task I set him was a simple one. "Get a list of all the clerks and assistants of the old Ministry, and find me one loyal and intelligent man from each department," I said. "It ought to be possible to find at least one from each department. When you've found them, take the names to the Control Department, have them registered, and see that they get passes to the Ministry. And send them all to me to-morrow morning to be given instructions. Then we'll get down to business."

The first time Saravia and Menendez found me, at four o'clock in the morning, signing an enormous pile of documents and letters, they burst out laughing. They had not realised the amount of work I had quietly got through in the office that had been reserved for me and Ortiz. Until September 5, by which date every sub-section had started to function properly, I signed all the Under-Secretariat papers myself.

I shall never forget the mornings when we worked

in a spirit of relative optimism. The days when the usual bad news arrived late were very few. But the hours of respite gave us an opportunity of realising that we were dropping with fatigue ; also we would find the least thing uproariously amusing on those occasions. One morning, for instance, after Menendez had become Under-Secretary, I presented him with a credit for ten million pesetas that needed his signature. " Take it, take it," he said. " You needn't even tell me what the money is for. If we lose, I'll be shot anyway. But even if we don't lose, I'll be shot for signing a credit for an amount like that, in a country which is used to thinking in ha'pence ! "

During my first days in the Minister's office, my colleagues were two naval officers. They were the aides-de-camp of Señor Giral, the Prime Minister and Minister of Marine. We worked on a table on which there were ten telephones. Our thankless task was to answer every call and put the callers through to Major Menendez, Colonel Saravia, or the Prime Minister, according to the nature of their business. Colonel Saravia and Major Menendez very soon became Minister and Under-Secretary respectively. Two of us were perpetually on duty while the third slept, but even then we were short-handed, and we were nearly always talking on two lines at once. We also had a typist who worked at another table. In the middle of the big, luxurious room, which had always been the office of the Minister of War, was a large oval table covered with maps and newspapers.

All day long all sorts of people came in and out, from Ministers and political leaders down to simple militiamen carrying their rifles. Some stopped and read the newspapers. As a result of a mistaken idea of democracy, no guards were posted outside and there was nothing to prevent anybody from entering. Often, while drafting an important order, we would be interrupted by somebody asking for a revolver or some-

thing absurd like that ; and nearly always the claimant would make out that the matter was very urgent indeed. We tried placing a Ministry clerk at each door, but it made no difference.

This was the period when everybody spoke to each other in the second person singular, and it never occurred to anybody that excessive democratic informality was incompatible with the conduct of a war. One night, later on, when enemy 'planes started bombing the Ministry and a large-calibre bomb dropped in the courtyard, only five yards from our windows, our nightly visitors disappeared as if by magic, and we were able to work for some time in peace. We were greatly amused at owing our tranquillity to enemy bombers.

The most appalling chatterboxes would remorselessly interrupt us and take up our time while we were immersed in the solution of the most pressing and vital problems. We put up with them with almost supernatural stoicism. Our bugbear was having to talk to leaders of the various working-class parties when they came to ask for rifles, ammunition, and supplies for this or that group or battalion, or, even worse, when they came to criticise. When Doña Margarita Nelken came to ask for arms or equipment for the people of Estremadura, for which she was deputy, everyone tried to avoid her. I often had to waste precious time talking to this lady. People still believed that the distribution of arms and ammunition went by favour. That gives some idea of the difficulties with which we were faced in our efforts to create an army.

So great was the shortage of *matériel* that from the time when I joined the Secretariat, the distribution of the available supply was controlled from the Minister's own office. All the arms that we got hold of, as well as ammunition, clothing, etc., were stored in the Ministry, and nothing could be taken away without

my signature. I was in constant touch with the armament factories, which regularly informed me of their requirements, and with the aid of the other Ministries and organisations I fulfilled their needs as best I could.

Powder was manufactured at the factory at Murcia, and arms at the factory at Toledo. The production of armaments was so important that Menendez took it under his own wing. Each night, as soon as they arrived from the factories, we organised the distribution of the munitions produced that day. We were never able to satisfy all needs. I used to go down into the courtyard and organise the convoys for each front myself. I even watched and checked the loading of the lorries. But my principal aim was to 'sneak' a little from each convoy. When twenty cases were asked for I sent seventeen, and so on, and I would have the surplus hidden in the vaults from all inquiring eyes.

One morning an urgent request came from Talavera for two hundred cases. Everybody believed that our supplies were utterly exhausted, and the Toledo factory informed us that they could send no more than fifty cases, and that not till the afternoon.

"It's as I always feared," I quietly remarked. "I knew I should never be able to accumulate a reserve. I shall have to draw on the one hundred and thirty-seven cases I've got downstairs." One after another the men in the office, 'the little band of poets' as I used to call them, embraced me, and one of them was so moved that he kissed me on the cheek.

Not a single day passed without the War Ministry being haunted by the shortage of munitions. This was true at least until 19 March 1937, which was the date when I left it, but I am afraid that things have not altered very much since then.

Our first preoccupation was always the northern theatre of war, Asturias and Santander. Every day

we sent a convoy there by one of our few serviceable planes.

I regard it as a peculiar blessing of Providence that some of the very worst hours we went through then have vanished completely from my mind. That is what happened in the case of the fall of Irún and San Sebastián. My memory of both is slight, and the most poignant details I have forgotten. I only remember two or three telephone conversations via France with the civil governor of San Sebastián and his military commandant. I also remember some talks with Barcelona, from where, though they there were no better off, or even worse off than we, they sent two convoys to the North through France, on our promise to compensate them. I still do not know for certain whether these convoys ever reached Irún safely, or whether the second one was stopped by order of the French Government.

When Colonel Saravia was appointed Minister of War in succession to General Castelló, with Major Menendez as his Under-Secretary, I left the telephone table, where we were replaced by a number of officers, assisted by some typists.

Captain Córdón, of the artillery, and Captain Nuñez, of the Air Force, both of whom had been retired under Azaña's famous law, were the life and soul of the technical secretariat. During the first days of the rebellion they had acted as liaison officers between the Ministry and the militia office. They had established themselves in the room which before the outbreak had been occupied by the Minister's personal staff. All orders, both for the militia department and for the armed units, emanated from here.

As soon as Córdón and Nuñez heard of the revolt of the officers in Morocco, they had hurried to the Ministry, established themselves in this room and started giving orders on their own initiative. The need was urgent, and they had acquitted themselves

magnificently. Both of them liked decisive action and believed in it. They believed that in war hesitation is fatal, and acted accordingly. They believed it preferable to give a mistaken order than to give some such answer as : " I'll think about it, I can't tell you now ; ring me up again later ; wait till I've talked it over with the Comrade Minister."

Nuñez often said that he gave his orders by guesswork. When I asked him what he meant he said :

" Haven't you ever been rabbit-shooting in a thick wood where you only see the rabbit for a second and there's no time to take aim ? You have to fire at once, without aiming. That's what I call shooting by guesswork. If we sat here and patiently worked out the correct solution to every problem, particularly those put to us by your militia, the war would be over before we had done anything. If we put people off and asked them to wait until we had consulted the Minister and told them to ring up again later, not only would they never ring up again, but they would act entirely on their own and the chaos would be greater than ever."

There was, of course, no General Staff, but its functions were partly fulfilled by the Intelligence Department, which received all cables and wireless messages. It always functioned perfectly. A complete, up-to-the-minute bulletin describing the military situation was compiled by this department and laid on the Minister's desk at regular half-hourly intervals. Most of the other departments of the General Staff were not created until after September 5, when, as a result of another Cabinet crisis, Largo Caballero became Minister of War. There were rooms which we called ' operations section ' and ' technical section ' respectively, but every time you entered them you found new faces. The personnel was constantly being renewed, partly because officers were always being

recalled to the front to take charge of the militiamen's operation., partly because many of them were discovered to be Fascists and were sent to prison. Consequently everything devolved upon the department of the Minister himself.

At this point, where everything was concentrated, the most unbridled absolutism prevailed. The department issued orders for boots, supplied strategical plans, and often even gave orders for the most ordinary tactical operations. Nothing was more desirable than the formation of a proper General Staff. But where were we to find the personnel ?

I forget who it was who remarked : " Liberalism can never be surpassed, and it can only be attained by the most persevering efforts." The absolutism of our department was independent of and superior to our will, and we had no choice but to be absolutists ourselves. To have tried to form a General Staff at that moment, while the men in the fighting line were short of officers and our best human material was absolutely lacking in cohesion, would have been like trying to build a house from the roof downwards. " I absolve you of the sin of absolutism, sons of El Empecinado,"¹ a wit remarked one day.

Such sallies did us a great deal of good, for we could do with a little comic relief.

Absolutism reached its apex at a corner formed by the Minister's table and another big table called the table of the technical secretariat, placed at right angles to it. Here stood the telephone table, and next to it another for the typists.

The telephone calls were of many kinds. There were those which could be dealt with by the officers who had the entertaining job of finding out which of the various instruments it was that was actually

¹ *El Empecinado* was the name given to a celebrated guerrilla leader and champion of Liberalism in the early nineteenth century. He was executed by the Absolutists in 1825.

ringing. When it was simply a matter of taking information the calls were dealt with by a typist. Then there were the calls that had to be dealt with by Córdón, Nuñez, and myself. Finally there were the extremely urgent and important ones which had to be put through to the Under-Secretary or to the Minister himself. As generally several of us were talking at the same time, lines inevitably became entangled and frequent confusion resulted.

I sat at a chair inside the right angle, sometimes moving it to the Minister's table, sometimes to that of the technical secretariat.

Telegrams, typed messages, reports, all of the most desperate urgency, descended upon the Minister's table in a perpetual stream. After being read and annotated by the Minister or the Under-Secretary, they would be passed out to me. I still remember how I classified them. I marked them 'urgent,' 'very urgent,' 'to be settled within twelve hours,' 'for the attention of Córdón,' etc. We worked feverishly, always in the presence of onlookers who wandered in and out of the room. Often, while engaged in making some important decision, we would be interrupted by some busybody who was fidgeting with the maps on the table, whose stupid questions we had to answer. We dictated the many decrees which were issued during this period under the same conditions.

We often derived considerable entertainment from the file marked 'for the attention of Córdón.' The Ministry for Foreign Affairs passed on to us piles of telegrams from embassies, consulates, and political organisations abroad, as well as from armament and aeroplane manufacturers, etc., offering munitions and supplies. All these offers were passed over to Córdón, who claimed to be a specialist in such matters. His specialism was of a simple but original kind. Thus, if he received an offer of ten aeroplanes, a figure which seemed astronomical at that time, he merely noted in

the margin: 'Agreed, but we need two hundred aeroplanes, not ten.'

We soon discovered the secret of his method. He merely doubled every figure and then added a nought to it. We told him that anybody could have done that.

"Not at all!" he said, with some heat. "It's you people who find an offer of ten aeroplanes embarrassing, and—pardon me, my dear Finance Minister—force me to limit my demands to two hundred only. But tanks—tanks are a different matter. Where tanks are concerned I don't just double the figure and add a nought to it. That would be absolutely ridiculous. The last offer for tanks was also for ten only, so I multiplied that figure by four, of course adding the necessary nought."

The fact that the gold of the Bank of Spain was in our hands made us confident of ultimate victory. It never for a moment entered our heads that a legitimate democratic government might be deprived of its right to buy war material abroad. Thus we regarded Cerdón's dossier as an absolute guarantee that we should soon be able to put an end to the struggle.

When the question of buying twenty thousand rifles and twenty million rounds of ammunition from the Mexican Government arose (I am not sure of the figures—it may have been thirty thousand rifles and thirty million rounds of ammunition), there were many protests, on the ground that they would take a month to arrive and the war might be over by then. But Cerdón and I and some others would have none of such reckless optimism.

Very few of us realised the complete *volte-face* on the part of the French Government that took place between August 6 and 7. On August 6 the Blum Government was still willing, in accordance with the rules of international law, to allow the Spanish Government to buy munitions freely in France. But on August 7 it abruptly forbade the sending of arms to

Spain. I knew that it was London that was responsible for this decision.

I still remember the expression on Señor Giral's fine, academic face when he received the news.

"Nothing is more mistaken," the Prime Minister said, "than the view, so firmly held in Spain, that the British Foreign Office never makes mistakes and always acts with wisdom. By forcing the hand of Paris they have committed more than a crime, they have committed an enormous ineptitude for which sooner or later they will have to pay. It was sufficient for the City of London to fear a Republican victory—they are blind enough to suppose that the Republican emblem is the hammer and sickle—and to go scuttling to the Foreign Office like a lot of frightened old maids. The latter promptly made common cause with them, and accepted the responsibility before history of more or less threatening the French Popular Front Government with a cancellation of the Locarno Pact if they allowed the export of arms to Spain. But the Spanish people will defend the Republic with their own bodies, and we shall defeat the rebel generals in spite of the disgraceful selfishness of London and the traitors in our own midst."

There was another file, marked 'Air Force Orders,' in which I put all requests for the co-operation of the air arm on the following day. The urgency with which every commander in the front line demanded support from the air is explained not only by the material, but by the moral effect of this arm. Sometimes they only asked for one machine, giving the most naïve explanations. "You at the Ministry cannot possibly understand the absolute necessity of sending us at least one machine," they told us on the telephone. "The militiamen must see that we have aeroplanes, too, and that we have more to rely on than flesh and blood alone."

Every night Colonel Pastor, chief of the Air Force,

came to our office from his own, and Menendez gave him the file for his attention.

"We have no more machines or pilots available," Pastor would say. "They have been flying all day and every day. The pilots are exhausted."

This note of cold realism spread pessimism throughout the office. He then told us his plans for the employment of the Air Force on the following day. But this was generally so much time wasted, because events always caused the plans to be changed.

One night a wireless operator came in and told us that the B.B.C. in London had announced that a Republican 'plane had bombed Ceuta and set fire to the petrol dumps. The flames had been clearly visible from Gibraltar. That night either the Minister or the Under-Secretary of State asked Pastor for the name of the pilot, whom he wished to congratulate personally on this feat.

"There must be some mistake," Pastor said. "I ordered no such bombing and I have no news of it. Unless, of course, it was Rexach."

Late that night, when only Menendez and I were left at the Ministry, Captain Rexach came in, wearing a fancy red shirt and with an automatic rifle slung over his shoulder. We informed him of the death of his brother, who was an artillery major and a Fascist and had been killed in the open street in Madrid. I then said to him :

"Listen, did you bomb Ceuta this afternoon?"

"Yes. What about it?"

"Nothing, only we heard about it over the wireless from London. We asked Pastor, and he knew nothing about it. He wondered whether you had done it on your own account."

"That's right. Old Gammy-leg (Pastor was lame) knows that I don't take orders from anybody, and bomb where I please."

Rexach violently disapproved of Government policy.

A Dragon aeroplane, on its way from Germany to the rebels, had run out of petrol and made a forced landing in our lines, at Azuaga. Rexach had got hold of it, and just when he was patting himself on the back for having such a magnificent machine at his disposal the Prime Minister had ordered that it should not be used, in spite of our great need of it, in order to avoid complications with Germany. Two months later it was destroyed when the rebels bombed the Barajas aerodrome.

The Minister slept from 3 a.m. to 9 a.m., Menendez from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and I from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Cordón and Nuñez went home to sleep on alternate nights.

Sometimes this routine was interfered with by urgent business. But if we lost sleep on one occasion we were sometimes able to make it up on another. Menendez slept least. Often he did not go to bed at all, but merely rested on a couch in the office, or went to bed after lunch at three o'clock in the afternoon. On these occasions Saravia and I let him sleep until seven or eight in the evening. Thus he would sometimes be asleep at five o'clock, when the Minister had to go to the Palace for a Cabinet meeting.

"Take my chair and act as Minister and Chief-of-Staff," Saravia would say, "but don't wake Menendez on any account. If anything serious happens, 'phone me at the Cabinet meeting, but don't wake Menendez under any circumstances whatever."

Frequently, when I was confronted with some unexpected problem and did not dare either to telephone the Minister or to awaken Menendez, the latter would suddenly walk in, the nervous tension being too great to allow him to sleep. He would then firmly but kindly insist on my taking some rest, though I, too, would be unable to stay in bed for any length of time, and would walk into the office before I was expected, much to the disgust of those who thought I was still asleep.

The supply of arms and ammunition was a constant obsession. We hoped to make the depot at Mahón (Minorca) available for later use. It was intended not only to rescue us from our day-to-day anxieties, but also to serve as a base for the transfer of the armament factory from Toledo.

Major Menendez was the most gifted of all the Republican officers I knew. He was a man of penetrating vision, and had a profound knowledge of the art of war. He foresaw the strategy of the rebels from the start. He realised that their principal objective before directly attacking Madrid would be Toledo, not only for the sake of relieving the Alcazar, but principally for the sake of the munitions factory. The march of events was exactly in accordance with his expectations.

We had great hopes of capturing the Alcazar, which was a thorn in our side, immobilising about three thousand rifles. In addition, a considerable amount of arms and ammunition would have fallen into our hands if we had captured it.

We had a lot of trouble in securing one 155 mm. gun for Toledo. I cannot remember whether we finally obtained it from General Martinez Cabrera, the military governor of Cartagena, or from the factory at Murcia, which used one such gun for experimental purposes. However, we obtained it in the end, and we were at last in a position to carry out an effective bombardment of the famous Alcazar of Toledo. But there was not a single officer who knew how to use the gun, and in the end we had to send for an unfortunate Reservist officer who had risen from the ranks. Alas! his career was short-lived. He fired a few rounds which, instead of hitting their mark, exploded among a group of factory workers and caused many casualties. The rumour went round that this was a deliberate act of treachery, and the man was killed.

Another grave difficulty was the total lack of fuses.

They were not easy to manufacture, but we eventually got production going, though on an absurdly small scale. At first the output was only a handful a day.

We set great store on shelling the Alcazar, but we had to yield to desperate demands and send our available fuses elsewhere. Sometimes we managed to reserve a few for Toledo. "To-morrow, with these ten fuses, our gun will drop ten shells upon the Alcazar," we would solemnly announce. But, as so often in history, small causes produce big effects. The lack of fuses, a small and entirely accidental detail, enabled the rebels to grow lyrical over the 'heroic' feats of the defenders of the Alcazar.

I have never been so deeply moved as at the following incident. One afternoon, just as we sat down to lunch, the comrade who acted as office guard came in and whispered something into Saravia's ear. The latter said something to Menendez which I did not hear, and the two rose and hurriedly left the room, saying no more than: "Martín, you stay here and act as Minister, while we go to Toledo."

We all left our meal and hurried into the office, where we learned that the civil governor of Toledo had announced that the Alcazar had raised the white flag.

I do not know who first suggested it or gave the order, but I think it was spontaneously that we immediately started telephoning La Pasionaria and others who enjoyed great prestige among the militiamen. We desired their co-operation in the plan we had in mind.

La Pasionaria appeared almost at once, as if she had been in the next room. I did not know her, even by sight, but subsequently I got to know her well. We all talked to her at the same time, stammering in our excitement.

"We must save the lives of the children in the Alcazar! And the lives of the soldiers! And the lives

of all the Civil Guards ! And the lives of the officers, too ! Not a single life must be lost !¹ We want you to enter the Alcazar at the head of the militia, and open a new era with no more massacre and vengeance ! ”

She shook hands with us, and some of us embraced her. We all had tears in our eyes. Somebody shamefacedly remarked : “ Martín is right. We really are a lot of poets ! ”

Our joy was short-lived. La Pasionaria just had time to reach the street, where she saw us anxiously waving and beckoning her to return. She did so, pale and trembling. We had no need to tell her what had happened, for she had already guessed. The news was false.

¹ All the efforts the Government, with the support of the Diplomatic Corps and some ecclesiastical authorities, had made to have the rebel women and children who had taken refuge in the Alcazar evacuated, had been unsuccessful.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Generals Died at Dawn

THE Catalans and Aragonese, without the knowledge or consent of the Ministry of War, undertook an expedition of the kind that they had frequently carried out in earlier ages in the Near East.

The leader of the Catalan forces was Captain Bayo, an airman, and Captain Urribari, of the Civil Guards, was the commander of those from Valencia. We learned of their expedition by telegrams in which they announced the occupation of Ibiza, in the Balearics, and ended by enthusiastic protestations of loyalty and devotion to the Republic.

The news was a surprise, and to most of us an unwelcome one. Some prominent personalities were extremely annoyed, not only because this adventure had been undertaken without their consent, but because the forces that had been sent to the Balearics were urgently needed for the defence of the capital, and it seemed unpardonable to waste our man-power and material on such distant objectives. It meant abandoning all hope of transferring the Toledo factory to the rear. This factory was inadequate for filling our day-to-day requirements, much less for building up a reserve, and without a reserve it was impossible to contemplate dismantling it.

I confess that I was alone in not accepting these considerations as final. I was convinced that we must start with the assumption that the war would be a

long one, and, in view of the extraordinary strategic importance of the islands, not only for our war, but for international conflicts which would no doubt follow, I regarded the idea of seizing them as a brilliant one. When others, whose eyes were fixed solely upon the difficulties of the moment, reproached me for holding this view, I used, somewhat timidly, to reply as follows :

“ We have no General Staff, no officers, no arms, and no ammunition. All we have is courage, and the language to be used to the courageous is this : At Palma there are arms and ammunition. Very well then, take them. Besides, one always pays dearly for offending against one of the basic rules of war. We are overwhelmed by the difficulties of the moment, we are forced to accept the strategy imposed on us by the enemy, and we have been compelled unconditionally to surrender the initiative. If we allow this to go on, we are heading straight for defeat. We must put first things first. In my view, the Balearics are more important than the Sierra. If we can gain control of the strategical key to Europe, what will it matter if we have to defend Madrid in the streets of Madrid itself ? ”

Bayo's and Urribari's telegrams grew more and more encouraging. After occupying Ibiza, they landed in Majorca under cover of the Republican fleet, which was then undisputed mistress of the seas.

But at the beginning of a war it is almost impossible to overestimate the effectiveness of the newest arm of all, the air arm. Its moral effect is terrific. At the first clash of two armies, if one side has aeroplanes and the other has not, the former will undoubtedly put the latter to flight. That is what happened in Majorca.

Bayo and Urribari went from success to success, because the old Savoia machines from Barcelona met with no resistance and were repeatedly able to sow panic among the rebel troops. Bayo's and Urribari's

telegrams, though the two inevitably started criticising one another, caused general satisfaction. We intercepted the wireless messages sent to Franco by the military commandant of Palma, and these also gave us great satisfaction. He described the situation as hopeless. Franco's replies were full of fine patriotic phrases. He held up the heroes of the Alcazar as a model to Majorca, and appealed to the rebels there to be equally heroic. One telegram said that adequate help would come if they held out long enough.

This telegram made us smile, because it was obvious that Franco could not give the slightest help. Somebody mentioned the fact that Italian planes had made forced landings in Algeria on their way to aid the rebels in Spanish Morocco, and it was, therefore, possible that the Italians might come to Franco's aid in Majorca as well. But nobody paid any attention, since it seemed absurd to suppose that Italy would dare go to such extremes without protest on the part of the democratic Powers. But a few Italian machines were sufficient to shatter all our illusions. The Republican expedition was defeated and had to return to the mainland.

Most of the people we had to deal with were still convinced that the war would be over in a few weeks. But there were an increasing number who realised that a long war was inevitable. In the early days, with the help of my colleagues of the supplies department, I had prepared the draft of a decree setting up a central buying organisation, which would be responsible for the purchase of all clothing and equipment for the winter campaign. At the time I was laughed at for my pains, but eventually my draft was endorsed by the Cabinet and put into operation.

In spite of the pressure of events, we did not lose

sight of the major task of forming an army. This aim was borne in mind in making every decision not concerned exclusively with immediate problems.

All our work in the department was done in the shadow of the tragedy taking place outside. In spite of the bitterness of the struggle, our sensibilities were not completely blunted. The saddest thing was that this war had been forced on us against our will. What affected us most was to be brought up against individual cases.

One day, for instance, that model soldier, Major Perea, sent us the kit of a whole rebel company that had been annihilated by his men in the Sierra, together with the papers found on the bodies of the dead. In a moment of relative calm somebody started reading a letter found on the body of the captain who had been in command of the company and had been one of the first to fall. It was a letter from his wife, dated from Saragossa. It said in simple words that she did not feel well, that she had seen the doctor and that a child would be born within the next few days. 'I am a little ashamed and afraid,' she wrote, 'because I have a presentiment that it will happen on August 20, exactly nine months after our marriage, when our happiness began. You know how my brothers will laugh at us for not having lost a moment.' The letter finished with an expression of hope that her husband would get leave to be with her on the day, 'unless this accursed war has ended by then.'

We all were deeply moved by this letter. When our colleague had finished reading it, he made some *sotto voce* comments, which only a Communist deputy, who happened to be present, overheard.

"Don't be silly," he said aloud, in a voice which everybody could hear. "Don't be afraid of speaking up like a man. I agree with what you just said, and I shall repeat it. What you said was: 'God will punish those who capriciously let loose this thousand-times accursed war.'"

I believe it was the Minister himself who ordered us to put a brake on our sensibilities. He added that it was our duty not to wait for Heaven to punish the rebels, but to punish them ourselves, and he asked all those who had no business in the office to leave immediately.

One day I noticed a black, blood-stained parcel on the couch in the office. I never found out who put it there. When Menendez saw it, he ordered it to be removed, and forbade war trophies of any kind to be brought into the office in the future. The parcel contained a fine soutane which had belonged to a priest who had come from Pamplona to the Alto de Leon with the Requetés. This priest's death had created a sensation. For two days the militiamen had been suffering numerous casualties from isolated shots which did not come from the enemy lines. The men had the disagreeable feeling that there were Fascists and traitors in their own ranks. Steps were taken to discover the source of the shots, and on the third day it was found that they came from a tree just behind the line. A priest was hidden in the foliage. He refused to surrender, so they brought him down like a bird. He fell, with his rifle, like a great black crow, and struck the earth with a dull thud. He was not a village priest from the mountains of Navarre, but a young man with fine features, who had only recently left the seminary, and he was dressed with the elegance of a Jesuit. He had with him an elegant parcel containing provisions (this also was brought to our office), and he had been spending the day sniping at militiamen at his leisure.

When the death sentence was pronounced in Barcelona on General Goded, the leader of the insurgents in Catalonia, the news was so much expected

that it did not create much of an impression. It was the automatic consequence of what he had done, and so many things had happened, and were still happening that this incident passed practically unnoticed. Our attention was fully engaged elsewhere, and we did not even mention General Goded in our conversations, though he was one of the most outstanding personalities in the rebel camp. After the death of General Sanjurjo, he could have claimed the position afterwards obtained by Franco, who was certainly his inferior in every respect. But as he was the first rebel to be legally executed, I propose to describe what I remember of the event.

In the case of a death-sentence by a court martial, the law required that the full Cabinet should meet and either submit a reprieve for the President's approval or notify the military authorities that the Government had 'taken cognisance' of the sentence of the court. Unless the Government did the latter the execution could not take place. But in this case the Government had already agreed that its consent could be taken for granted without further formalities. This decision was natural enough in the circumstances.

Immediately after the news of the verdict was received, I was asked by Don José Giral, the Prime Minister, to help him in a disagreeable task. I went with him to a small room in the Minister of War's private suite, far from all inquisitive ears, where one could telephone without being overheard. The Prime Minister rang up each Minister in turn, and informed them one by one that, in accordance with the decision of the last Cabinet meeting, the President would inform Barcelona that 'cognisance had been taken' of the death sentence. My impression was that the chivalrous Don José, Prime Minister of the first Republican Government to order a death-sentence, greatly disliked his task.

I obtained each connection for him, and he took

the receiver from me as though I were offering him a cup of poison.

"In accordance with our decision," he said, "Barcelona will be informed that we have taken cognisance of the death-sentence on General Goded, who will accordingly be shot at dawn to-morrow. I thought it my duty to inform you."

"Yes, I regret it, too," he added once or twice. "But what can we do? We must see it through. Good night."

In the case of several Ministers with whom I was acquainted, I did the telephoning for him. The Minister of Public Instruction, however, protested, and announced that he did not give his consent. I, therefore, handed the receiver to Don José, who was a close relative of his.

"Listen, Paco," he said. "We must regard this as one of the pills we have to swallow, and there's no help for it. What you say is quite unreasonable and unrealistic. Go to bed and stop worrying about it. Believe me, we have considered the matter thoroughly, and we could not possibly have acted differently. You can go to sleep with your mind at rest. We are only doing our duty. Good night."

History repeated itself a few days later, when the sentence was pronounced on General Fanjul, leader of the rising in Madrid. Next morning, during an interval of relative calm, when the Minister had gone to bed and the Under-Secretary was asleep on a couch in the office, General Castelló, who had been appointed to the command of the Madrid division, rang up and asked to be put through to the Minister. I asked the General if it were a matter he could talk about to me, as Saravia and Menendez were resting.

"Very well, then, please inform the Minister that in accordance with regulations I have duly reported to the Ministry. The sentence has just been carried out."

As courts martial were sitting continually, the

telephone rang regularly at ten minutes past six every morning, and General Castelló would inform us that another death-sentence had just been carried out.

I grew to hate General Castelló's voice saying : "The sentence has just been carried out." One night, on the eve of the execution of Engineer-Lieutenant Caruncho, who had been a great friend of mine during the last days of the monarchy, when he had been a fervent Republican, I could bear it no longer. I asked the Minister to exempt General Castelló from the rule of immediately reporting executions. The Minister willingly agreed, and gave the necessary instructions at once.

The same day we intercepted an enemy wireless message announcing that the rebels had shot a brother of our Captain Galán¹ for his Republican convictions. Galán himself walked into the office soon afterwards, coming straight from the front. He did not yet know the news, and was full of anxiety about another matter. Before presenting his request his eye fell upon the pile of intercepted enemy messages, but somebody adroitly removed them in order to spare him the knowledge of his brother's fate. Galán knew that the request he had come to make could not be granted, as he himself admitted. His object had been to obtain a pardon for another brother, a Fascist naval officer, who was due to be shot at dawn next day.

The capture of the Montaña and Campamento Barracks did not put an end to the nightly shooting in Madrid. Sometimes there would be an almost

¹ Another brother of Captain Galán had led the famous Republican rising in Jaca, in December 1930, and had been executed after its failure.

continuous fusillade. I often listened to it when I went out on to the balcony of our office for a few moments' fresh air. The marksmen were Fascists who wished to create panic in Madrid, and believed that Mola would be entering the city in a few hours.

In the early days shots were fired from church-towers and monasteries. As a result, the people of Madrid lost their patience and self-control. Prophetic gifts were not required to foresee the approaching storm. It was feared that the well-justified anger of the population would one day lead to a catastrophe. But we also hoped that nothing grave would happen. The people of Madrid are kind, we reassured ourselves.

But one day passions had reached such fever-pitch that they absorbed all our attention. Even the situation at the front receded into the background. We had to forestall the storming of the gaols and the wholesale killing of all the Fascists in Madrid. We mobilised whatever forces we could get hold of, and appealed for the co-operation of everybody who had influence over the masses. Moreover, we could rely on the discipline of the Communist Party. We were asked to send officers to take command of the Communist groups in order to help them to enforce order, and I felt obliged to volunteer for the task myself. But Menendez objected.

"I don't need you to-night, because I am rested," he said. "You will go home, go to bed and take these pills. Heaven knows who gave them to me, but look, they are advertised as 'giving refreshing sleep.' You will sleep for twelve hours. Otherwise you'll collapse, and then you'll be no good for anything."

I don't remember which Minister it was who bitterly remarked: "This Mola, with all his reputation for intelligence, is as brutal and stupid as any one of them. Just look what he has done by his announcement that he will take Madrid with the help of his

'fifth column.'¹ How can we prevent a general massacre of Fascists after this? How appalling is the stupidity of these generals!"

Next morning I returned to the office a different man, rested and refreshed—it was the only time I had slept at home—and asked for the news. There was news, important news, and nobody talked of anything but of the creation of popular tribunals and the nomination of the hero of the night before as president of the Supreme Court. Only a few assassinations had taken place in the Model Prison after all, but among the victims were several well-known political figures, such as Don Melquiadez Alvarez. But the announcement of the setting up of popular tribunals had calmed the population, and a catastrophe had been averted. The events of that night had made a profound impression upon some of the Ministers with whom we were in contact, and they even regarded it as a 'milestone in history.' Owing to the immense amount of energy they had put into it, they were quite unable to think of anything else, with the result that when one attempted to draw attention to a hundred other things that cropped up that day one could get no satisfaction whatever. I found it all very unintelligible. But then I had been to bed, and had been spared the intense excitement of that sensational night.

I asked my friend Ruiz, whom I shall later introduce more fully to my readers, to explain the phenomenon, and he had no difficulty in doing so.

"These men obviously react in accordance with their nature," he said. "Such things as winning the war, building up an army, exploiting our resources, need steady application and persistent effort. But they, as good Spaniards, prefer momentarily concentrating their energies upon making a moral

¹ By the 'fifth column' Mola meant the Fascists who remained in Madrid and would help to deliver the city into his hands.

gesture. They are loyal Republicans, anti-clericalists, and free-thinkers, but what interests them more than anything else, more even than the preservation of their lives, is the salvation of their souls. The salvation of souls has always been the chief Spanish preoccupation."

Ruiz was right. Henceforward when I contemplated the strange reactions of the Republican leaders to problems of relatively minor importance, I found the clue in Ruiz's explanation. What these men cared most about was the salvation of their souls. The news of a single murder in Madrid would knock all the stuffing out of them. Yet we were engaged in a civil war. If one appealed for their collaboration at such a moment, or even only asked their advice, they would reply : " It's all the same to me whether the Fascists come and kill us all or not ! "

We intercepted a wireless message from General Mola to the commander of the Civil Guards in Valladolid. While travelling from Valladolid to Burgos on the previous day, the General, to his great dissatisfaction, had found the road encumbered with corpses, and he had had to stop his car to have the road cleared. He insisted that other places be chosen for executions in future, and that the bodies be buried immediately. The message ended with a request for immediate acknowledgment.

I thought this message deserved to be framed and exhibited, and I naïvely hoped that it would serve me as an argument against those who complained so bitterly that the Republic was unable to enforce the law.

Brandishing this message in my hand, I said :

" You have no reason to reproach yourselves. If infuriated mobs commit murders in Madrid—fewer murders, by the way, than you imagine—you must just regard it as an unpleasant incident. To prevent murders and church-burnings you need a police and

an army. But have we a police and an army? No, they have revolted against us. Very well then, why do you worry so much about it and forget all our other tasks because of it?"

"What a country!" one of the Ministers replied. "We believed the Spaniards to be the most humane people in the world, and suddenly we awaken from our dreams and are confronted with the most merciless and aimless cruelty. How sad it is to discover the reality! There is nothing but cruelty and ferocity everywhere. What it is to be a Spaniard! On the other side they have every means of coercion at their disposal, yet they kill and murder all the time. When Spaniards are seized with the frenzy of action, everything they do is merciless. Are we not all Spaniards alike? There is no difference between us. We are all Spaniards. How terrible!"

"No, sir, there is a big difference," I replied. "You reproach yourself bitterly when the mob gets out of hand, while they use the police to murder and kill. Mola is annoyed at finding corpses on the public road, and orders his men to do their killing elsewhere and to bury the victims. Every deserter states that every day the military commander of each district draws up a list of people, every one of whom is inevitably shot. The only people killed on this side are those enemies whom you are unable to protect—enemies, I may remind you, who publicly proclaimed that they wished to kill three hundred thousand Spanish Republicans. Sometimes an innocent person is mistaken for a guilty one, but that is something that we all deplore and become indignant about, while Mola only objects to people being killed in the public roadway. He wants them to be killed, but elsewhere, and with a Christian burial. It's blasphemy, sir, to say that all Spaniards are alike!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Eustaquio Ruiz

FROM time to time we had to have a little distraction. Menendez and I were like stokers ; sometimes we had to escape momentarily from the overheated atmosphere in which we lived and have a little fresh air. Nothing did us more good than a talk with our common friend, Eustaquio Ruiz, the French teacher of the Emir of Tetuan. He had had the good fortune to leave Tetuan for Madrid on 16 July. Thus only his little library had provided the Fascists with fuel for the first *auto-da-fé* on Moorish soil.

He had studied at the university of Montpellier, where he had acquired great popularity by his contributions to the annual *fêtes*, at which he used to recite French and Spanish poetry. He was a native of Toro, in the province of Zamora, but had lived in Morocco for twenty years, in constant contact with the Spanish army. He claimed that no one knew the Spanish army as well as he, and well he might, after twenty years in Tetuan, with no friends but 'those attractive barbarians,' as he called the officers. He claimed that he had always been the last to leave the military club.

He had a profound knowledge of Spanish literature, and knew practically the whole of Spanish classical poetry by heart. It was to this that he attributed his deep love of everything Spanish.

I once heard him say that for him the height of happiness was watching Spaniards, just as the height of happiness for children was watching monkeys at the Zoo. "Abroad, when I can't see my Spaniards and don't hear their language, I'm bored to death," he said.

Once, more than ten years ago, I asked him how it was that he, a staunch enemy of the dictatorship, liked Primo de Rivera. This roused him.

"How could I possibly help liking Primo?" he exclaimed with some heat. "Isn't he the most typical Spaniard of our time? Does he not possess every single one of our natural defects in its pure and unadulterated form? Was there ever a gayer or more delightful boon-companion? Does he not believe that the way to save Spain is to ride out into the fields of La Mancha in the footsteps of Don Quixote? And to think that I shall die without ever having shared a few bottles of Manzanilla with Primo de Rivera!"

Ruiz told me a new story concerning Primo de Rivera, which summed up the latter to perfection. In 1925 Primo was in command of the army in Africa. This was just after the disastrous retreat from Xauen.

*No lo digo a humo de pajas
Tuvimos treinta mil bajas.¹*

The whole army was in Morocco, and Tetuan in particular was crowded with soldiers. At the theatre they smoked so much that it was impossible to breathe. Consequently smoking at the theatre was strictly prohibited by the military commandant, and an officer of high rank who disregarded the order was severely reprimanded. Even the actresses complained that it

¹ I am not speaking at random when I say that we lost thirty thousand men.

was impossible to sing in the smoke-laden atmosphere. But one night Primo de Rivera went to the theatre, beaming with satisfaction, because of a serious reverse inflicted that day upon the Moors. He was puffing away at an enormous Havana cigar. The public rose at his entry, and sang the national anthem, and then the performance continued. A member of his suite discreetly informed him that smoking was strictly prohibited. He rose to his feet, and the performance was stopped again. The audience was on tenterhooks, expecting something sensational. Rivera spoke to them, with his usual charm of manner. "Smoke!" he said. "Smoke! To-day everybody is allowed to smoke!"

One evening, after the Republic had been established, I met Ruiz in a cabaret in Tangiers, where he had gone with some officers for an evening's entertainment. I joined them, and we drank whisky and danced till half-past four in the morning, when the place closed and we had to leave. We walked for some time through the Chinese quarter, and, when this palled, went to a tavern at the harbour, just where the buses started for Tetuan and Llarache, which was my destination. While waiting for our garlic soup we sat at a table and talked of everything under the sun. Somehow or other Ruiz mentioned Goethe, and one of the officers, who was rather drunk, said:

"Goethe? Who's that? Some sort of intellectual, I suppose."

"Go to sleep and don't be ignorant," Ruiz replied. "Goethe was just a civilian, like me!"

Then he turned to me and asked whether I had ever heard of the famous cartoon in the Munich *Simplicissimus*. Some German officers were having a merry party, drinking champagne with a number of women. Two of them were sitting and talking a little apart. "When all is said and done," one of them

portentously announced, "we must admit that Goethe was only a civilian!"

"I shall never forget that famous old cartoon," Ruiz said. "I shall soon have been in Tetuan for twenty years, but I don't amount to anything, because I'm only a civilian. Yet I believe that these savages like me, for they always look to me for their entertainment. There are a few who appreciate me among the young ones, but there are also others who call me an 'intellectual,' which is the greatest insult they know."

"Can't you say what you think much more freely, now there's a Republic?"

"As a matter of fact, I always have been outspoken, even in Primo de Rivera's time, under the military dictatorship. There was less need to be careful than there is to-day, with Don Manuel Azaña as War Minister. They used to enjoy my sallies, but now, under the Republic, they have all become fervent admirers of Philip II, and many of my former friends hate me. They have gone so far as to say that one day they will burn an 'intellectual' alive in the Plaza de España in Tetuan. Their hatred of culture is greater than ever. It is impossible to explain to these soldiers that the essence of culture is that it is the exact opposite of brute force. You know as well as I do, Martín, how little they learn, and what sort of things they learn, as cadets at Toledo. It positively frightens me. They are always glorifying Spain, generally by holding a pistol to your chest, and yet they have no idea what Spain is to-day and what Spain was in the past. Did I tell you how I was attacked last month by some officers who used to be my friends? They were talking at the club about the greatness of Philip II. They were repeating the fantastic nonsense they were taught. I declared upon my honour, upon the honour of Spain and of the Spanish people, that in his lifetime Philip II did not

have a single admirer throughout the Peninsula. A major whom you know thereupon hit me, thinking I was insulting him."

Just as we were working at maximum pressure Ruiz would be announced.

"Please tell him that we are very busy and that neither of us can come out," we would say. "But we should very much like to see him if he can wait."

A long time afterwards one of us would remember his existence and send for the usher.

"Please ask Señor Ruiz not to go but to wait for us a little longer," we would say.

"He went long ago, sir, I'm afraid. He left a message saying he will come back to-morrow."

One night, when he came again, I went out to offer him a cigar and ask him to wait. Towards morning, when we had finally cleared our desks of Under-Secretariat business and the telephone-bells had at last stopped ringing, and we were feeling well satisfied because the news from the front happened to be satisfactory, we suddenly remembered Ruiz. We went outside, and found him fast asleep on a sofa in an ante-room. We promptly woke him, and took him to a café for breakfast.

"Do you see how right I was?" Ruiz said. "Who was it who was responsible for leaving arms in the hands of the army? What a disgraceful piece of folly! No one allows children to play with razors or scissors or matches, but you should have seen the roar of laughter that greeted me at the Café de la Granja two months ago, when I came to Madrid for a few days, and they asked me what effect the victory of the Popular Front was having in Morocco, and I told them that if they were stupid enough to leave arms

in the hands of the army, a catastrophe was bound to happen."

"Have you seen the Fifth Regiment?"¹

"Yes, this afternoon. That's why I didn't go home, but waited here all night. I wanted to cheer you up, and nothing could be more cheering than what I saw. You know how the Spaniard puts all his hatred for the army into the word *chopo*, meaning rifle. If he wants to say that he finished his military service a year ago, in other words that for a year he has been a free man and no longer a prisoner in the barracks, he says: 'It's a year since I left the *chopo*.' All his loathing of military life is concentrated in that phrase. Well, this afternoon I watched the distribution of the few rifles you sent them."

"The few rifles, indeed! We sent them a thousand."

"If you had seen the crowd waiting for them you would have realised that it was only a drop in the ocean. They don't know how to handle a rifle, or how to sling it over their shoulder even, but when a man is given one he hugs it and kisses it as though it were his sweetheart. You should have seen the envious glances the others cast at the lucky ones as they walked away. The crowd was told there were no more rifles, but nobody thought of going home, because everyone was afraid of losing his place in the queue. Thousands of men came from the villages of Estremadura, La Mancha, and Andalusia, believing you had enough rifles for everybody, and they are waiting there night and day."

"And what do they do?"

"They pray. They pray for arms. Don't laugh. I tell you they pray. It's the Spanish people talking to God. Oh, it's a delight to talk to them, particularly to those who have come barefooted, straight from their

¹ The Fifth Regiment consisted of Communists and was the first to be disciplined.

work in the field. What magnificent people ! They are the grandsons of Don Quixote. They believe that evil sorcerers are trying to prevent Spain becoming a better country, a better country for their sons than it was for them. When I questioned them they all replied : ' We are Communists, comrade.' The poor devils actually believe they are Communists ! That is a blasphemy. They're something far more than Communists. They are Spain itself. Never in history have Spaniards been so profoundly united in the cause of struggling humanity as these grandsons of Don Quixote."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Making Bricks without Straw

DAWN always found us busy with the affairs of the Under-Secretariat. We were alarmed to see that they grew daily in volume and urgency.

Between three and five in the morning the telephones were generally relatively quiet and allowed us a little peace to deal with the problem of the organisation of the new army. But we were nearly always interrupted by the arrival of bad news, and compelled to put aside consideration of everything but immediate necessities. This, and the situation in general, filled us with growing alarm. Rare, indeed, were the mornings when news of fresh disasters did not pour in. From six o'clock onwards we lifted the receiver with trembling hands. Calls would come in from every front, always appealing for help ; aeroplanes, reinforcements, guns, and ammunition.

Our greatest anxieties came from the sector of Navalperal, in the south-west corner of the Sierra, which was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Mangada. Mangada had long been extremely popular, and since the outbreak had become an idol of the masses. His column was the particular pride of the people of Madrid. His son was a Communist and belonged to the Telegraph Corps. The result was that whenever Mangada rang up and told us of his desperate plight in the face of a supposedly irresistible attack, for the rest of the morning we

would be overwhelmed at ten-minute intervals by desperate appeals from all quarters relating to the same attack. The Telegraph Operators' Committee, the North Station Committee, the UGT, the Communist Party, etc., would one after the other paint the situation in the most exaggerated colours, and appeal to us to send Mangada aeroplanes, reinforcements, ammunition. On an average this would be repeated every third or fourth day.

At nine o'clock the Minister arrived and we would inform him of the gravity of the situation.

"Is that all?" he would say. "That doesn't worry me a bit. Let's pass on to the next thing."

If we showed him a pile of telegrams concerning Navalperal, he would push them aside contemptuously.

"Nothing's happening," he would say. "There's nothing whatever to be alarmed about."

I looked at the Minister, and wondered whether he had gone mad or only spoke like that to keep up our morale. Although I knew the latter to be the case, yet sometimes I started doubting it.

"That's nothing," the Minister would repeat. "That's nothing. It has no importance at all. We are bound to win in the end."

We would look at him dumbfounded, and he would thereupon make his usual speech.

"Don't you know our ex-colleagues?" he would say, "or do you believe in miracles? Do you think that a lot of idiots who spent half a century disgracing themselves in the face of a handful of Moors have suddenly turned into military geniuses? They are rotten soldiers, as they always have been. Have you managed to find a 'plane? Very good, to-night you'll see we shall be congratulating Mangada on his success."

The result was always as Saravia foresaw. He was a man of swift and penetrating insight. An attack on a position as strong and mountainous as that of Navalperal without an overwhelming superiority

in both men and artillery, without complete mastery of the air, and with troops driven unwillingly into the firing-line, was a grave mistake on the part of the rebels. A few, a very few aeroplanes, dropping a few bombs, were sufficient to make them flee in disorder all the way to Avila, abandoning equipment of every kind.

The same evening the Minister and the Under-Secretary would congratulate Mangada, at the same time reminding him that when the enemy is routed he should be pursued. "As you did not do this," they would continue, "to-morrow you will order a reconnaissance." This would be duly carried out, and Mangada would inform us that he had collected, say, four guns, eight machine-guns, and several thousand rounds of ammunition. Such booty seemed fabulous, but we gently pointed out that a real pursuit might have yielded a far bigger haul, and that he really ought not to be satisfied with picking up merely what the routed enemy left behind.

Nevertheless, this fervent champion of popular liberties was exalted in the evening papers as though he were a real military genius, and that is what the majority of the population of Madrid genuinely believed him to be.

The first thing to come in next morning would be the usual appeals for reinforcements and munitions. I would go down to the vaults, where we stored our munitions, and would find the lieutenant in charge asleep on the floor, between his boxes of ammunition, from which he was inseparable.

"Well?" I would ask him. "What have you got in stock to-day?"

"There it is," he would reply. "Four repaired rifles, sixteen rifles out of order, fourteen rifles being repaired. Total, thirty-four."

"But what about this machine-gun?" I would ask, pointing to one I had just discovered.

"Oh, I forgot to put it on last night's list. They

brought it from the Sierra yesterday, it's out of order. I'll send it with the rifles to the Artillery Park to-day, and we'll see whether they can be repaired."

Meanwhile, thousands of rifles were being promenaded by non-combatants through the streets of Madrid, and one of our chief tasks was to make them available for the front. One of my objects in drafting the decree granting the militiamen ten pesetas a day had been to combat this abuse. As only men who accepted Government discipline were paid, the individuals who walked about Madrid with rifles slung over their shoulders and refused to go to the front were, I thought, bound to disappear. But in practice the decree failed to have this effect, owing to a foolish misinterpretation. Payment was not made per militarised unit, but was entrusted to the political parties. This led to all sorts of irregularities and waste, and worse still, retarded the growth of a regular army.

It must, however, be recognised that at our request the Republican, Socialist, and Communist parties undertook an energetic campaign against the 'heroes' who walked about the streets of Madrid all day and all night with rifles slung over their shoulders. The aid of the political parties was invaluable, but our need of the rifles the mob had seized in storming the barracks was so desperate that we could not afford to dismiss any expedient to recover them.

We discovered that the Ministry of the Interior was in possession of about twenty thousand pistols and revolvers which the police had taken from the extremists of both sides, Fascists and Anarchists, during the months before the rising. This stock, plus that of those gunsmiths' shops which had not been sacked, I removed to the War Ministry, where it was stored under my orders. Dr. Diaz Trigo, of the Militia department, from time to time fetched a load of pistols and revolvers and exchanged them for rifles,

which he brought us, taking a fresh load of small arms in return.

Madrid as a whole was sensible and good humoured. Life gradually became impossible for the scrimshankers who were still parading the streets. Anybody who entered a café with a rifle over his shoulder was received with a chorus of "Arms to the front! Heroes to the Sierra!" This treatment deflated even the most swaggering. They would try to explain that they had just come from the front, or were going straight back to it next day. Thus, when the news spread in Madrid that you could go to the Ministry and exchange your rifle for a revolver, those who realised that going to the Sierra was the only alternative gradually started handing over their rifles and receiving revolvers in exchange.

It must, however, be admitted that until about 10 August the presence of armed militiamen in the streets of Madrid was very useful. It was only due to their presence that the Civil Guards, who had started by serving the Republic well, later abstained from giving effect to their deeply ingrained hatred of it. Knowing that their barracks were surrounded by the militia which had stormed the Montaña Barracks, they allowed themselves to be disarmed without resistance.

Nobody had any objection to revolvers being given to those who gave up their rifles. We thought it useful to have a few thousand armed men in Madrid. Once, in one of the usual moments of alarm, somebody, hoping to cheer us up, said that it was very unimaginative of us to make the defence of the Sierra our sole objective. In his opinion that was absurd. He had always believed in letting Mola and his Requetés enter Madrid, because once in Madrid nothing would have been easier than to have clapped all in gaol.

This did not sound so very far-fetched to me. We had unquestionable proof that the Requetés were the

only units on whom Mola could rely completely, and that the regular soldiers had to be watched constantly by officers and Requetés in the front line. In spite of this, however, there were many deserters.

This reminds me of the story told by Señor Gonzalo de Reparaz of a Spanish military attaché in Washington who, before the Spanish-American War, told an American in all seriousness that the Americans, being a nation of shopkeepers, could not possibly compete with the Spaniards in fighting spirit.

"I guarantee I could land in New York at the head of my regiment," he boasted.

"No doubt you could," the American replied. "But I warn you that if you or your men caused the slightest disturbance or breach of the peace you would all be locked up!"

On an average we exchanged a thousand revolvers for a thousand rifles every day. Early each morning I got in touch with Lieutenant Lopez Mejias, who was the life and soul of the militia. He had established his headquarters in a big room in a marquis's palace in the Calle de Rios Rosas. He used to give me names of people to apply to for men and rifles.

"Listen," he would say. "I've got reliable information that there are sixty rifles in such and such a village in such and such a province. Ring up Señor so-and-so, who is a deputy for that province, and try to get him to fetch those rifles to-day. Let him have a lorry. He's very popular, and he'll get them for you. The Communist Party have promised me four hundred armed men to-day, fifteen from one branch, twenty from another, and so on. The Socialist Party have promised me so many. But they need uniforms, boots, equipment of all sorts. How many rifles can you spare for me to-day?"

"One thousand."

"Whom shall I give them to? Shall I give them to the Fifth Regiment, or have you anyone else in

mind ? You know I have thousands of men clamouring for them."

"Of course give them to the Fifth Regiment. Send me a Train Corps officer, and I'll tell him where to pick up uniforms, boots, blankets, belts, etc. There are not quite enough to go round, but very nearly. Send some reliable men to take charge of all these things, because we don't want any of them to go astray. I want to hand the rifles over to them personally."

"Where will these thousand men be sent ? Navalperal, the Sierra, Talavera, Cordova ?"

"I don't know. We should like to keep them in Madrid and form a reserve column. We want to put an end to the daily tragedy of having no reserves. Every morning we get desperate appeals and have no one to send. We have to improvise all the time. It's like making bricks without straw."

Obviously we did not increase our army by two thousand men a day by means of telephone calls only. But two thousand men was the rate we maintained for the last three weeks of Saravia's term as War Minister. It seemed a miracle, to me and to everybody else.

In the morning a Minister would leave our office in despair, seeing that we had nothing but a few 'dud' rifles with which to meet the numerous desperate appeals for aid. The same evening he would inquire anxiously whether we had been able to do anything, and we would be able to tell him that two thousand men were ready to leave for the front. "But you're wizards !" he would exclaim.

Even the War Minister, overhearing what I said on the telephone one night, refused to believe his ears. So to convince him I offered to order the men to march down the Calle Alcalá that night before they left.

As soon as we heard the drums and fifes we left everything and dashed to the main entrance of the

Ministry in the Calle Alcalá. The cheering and the enthusiasm were tremendous. We of the Ministry stood stiffly to attention, and it was a stirring moment.

Most of the soldiers were sun-tanned peasants, who had come to Madrid, many of them on foot, from the villages of Andalusia, La Mancha, and Estremadura, because they had heard that there were rifles in Madrid for everybody willing to fight for the Republic. They were trying to march in military fashion, but the results were somewhat amusing. You could see that they were trying to march as their instructors had vainly tried to teach them in the days of their military service. But it was impossible. The cheers drowned the music, and crowds, mostly women and envious volunteers who had not yet secured rifles, broke their ranks, mixing with them and embracing them. It was an unforgettable scene.

There was one commander in the Sierra, Major Perea, whose troops were holding the heights between Navacerrada and Somosierra, who, we always said, was like a father to us. He never gave us a moment's anxiety. Yet his sector was assailed as vigorously as any other. Sometimes, as a result of information from other sectors, we would ring Perea up. We would have heard from the Alto de Leon, say, or Navacerrada, or Somosierra, that things were for the moment relatively quiet, but that a terrific bombardment was taking place on Perea's front, where a battle-royal seemed to be in progress. It was obvious, they said, that he must be having a very hot time.

He would come to the telephone completely unperturbed, and tell us that nothing was happening. "There's nothing new on this sector," he would say, "nothing new whatever. They are attacking very strongly, and with plenty of metal behind them. We

are suffering losses, but their losses are heavier. It's a pity I haven't got a few more machine-guns. But don't worry, we shan't yield an inch. We're well dug in, and they'll never dislodge us. I know you can't send me reinforcements or aeroplanes, so I don't ask for anything. But don't forget me if anything turns up. I'm told the attack is intensifying, so I must ring off now and go back to my post. If you can send a few blankets along I shall be very grateful, because the men are suffering terribly from the cold at night ; only if you have them available, of course."

You can imagine how grateful we were to this brave soldier, and with what solicitude we hunted up all the blankets and *matériel* that we could lay our hands on for him. No one at the Ministry knew him personally, and I have always regretted not having had the honour of shaking his hand. I learned that he had been retired under Azaña's pension law, and that he was a quiet, reserved man, who knew his job and did it conscientiously.

The Alto de Leon sector was under the command of Colonel Asensio, who had taken over from General Riquelme. The latter had been dropped after leading the militia into repeated reverses by attempting to attack the opposite heights. I never discovered who was responsible for the folly of attempting to assault impregnable positions with imperfectly trained militia-men unprovided with officers. The initiative may have been the general's own, or it may have been the result of the pressure of public opinion in Madrid, which always wanted offensives, or of pressure by the militia-men themselves, who had successfully subdued the rebellion at Alcalá de Henares and Guadalajara.

Colonel Asensio, by teaching the militia-men to entrench themselves and hold their ground, rendered a signal service to the Republic. Under Asensio's orders the militia-men staved off every attempt of the enemy to reach their chief objective, Madrid, and

learned to be real soldiers. That glory is his, and nobody can deprive him of it.

Asensio, like Perea, always said that nothing was happening on his sector, but he made more requests for reinforcements and munitions than any other commander, and while the others existed miserably from hand to mouth, he actually succeeded in accumulating reserves, even of ammunition.

Each night, when we talked over the amounts of ammunition to be sent to the various fronts at dawn next day, Menendez would ask me :

“ How many boxes did Asensio ask for ? ”

“ A hundred.”

“ What nonsense ! That’s absolutely out of the question. He wants more than half of our whole supply. I shall only send him eighty.”

“ We daren’t be stingy to the Alto de Leon,” somebody remarked. “ It’s the key to our whole position.”

“ It’s obvious you don’t know Asensio,” the Under-Secretary replied. “ I know him as well as I know myself. If I were in his position I couldn’t sleep unless I had a small reserve of ammunition. If we only send him eighty boxes, I’m positive he’ll put at least half of them in his reserve. Don’t be so credulous. An officer who knows his job as well as Asensio is bound, in the present circumstances, to ask for at least double his real needs.”

On the Peguerinos front we achieved a remarkable success, which was later, however, to lead to unfortunate consequences, in my opinion. This sector, which extended between the Alto de Leon and Navalperal, was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Rubio. There had been severe fighting here, and on each occasion the attacking side had had the worst of it, as was only to be expected. Finally the rebels, smarting under their failures at Navalperal and elsewhere in the Sierra, launched a violent offensive at Peguerinos, for the first time using Moors and Foreign

Legionaries brought over from Africa. The initial success of the offensive was complete. Rubio's forces were driven back, the rebels occupied the village of Peguerinos, and the road to the Escorial lay open.

The news that poured in was so alarming, and I was so discouraged at there being nothing I could do to help, that I almost lost heart and believed this to be the end. It was then that I had an opportunity of appreciating Menendez's sterling qualities to the full. He gently but firmly reprimanded me.

"Don't give in in this unsoldierly fashion," he said. "Pull yourself together, and first of all don't let your anxiety be perceptible to others. I'll ring up Asensio and ask him to hold the militiamen."

Asensio was not available. His staff told us that though Rubio's sector was entirely independent of his, Asensio had taken some of his men and had gone to try and remedy the situation.

The result was the biggest victory the Republican side has ever had, with the single exception of the rout of the Italians at Guadalajara.

The enemy break-through had taken place on a very narrow front. But their advance was so triumphant and resistance was so completely smashed that they believed the Escorial and Madrid to be almost in their grasp.

But Asensio, who had much experience of war in Morocco, could read the minds of the enemy, his former colleagues. Instead of attempting to gather Rubio's dispersed militiamen, he conceived the brilliant idea of advancing resolutely on the enemy's left flank and seizing the position on top of a col that Rubio's men had been forced to abandon in the morning. This cut off the enemy's retreat and struck panic into his ranks. The Moors were the worst affected. They abandoned their officers and fled in all directions. The result was that the rebel forces were almost completely annihilated.

The Moors are natural warriors, but when they were attacked in the rear they became completely demoralised. In their headlong flight many of them hopelessly lost their way, and for days afterwards isolated Moors were found wandering behind the lines, sometimes in the very outskirts of Madrid. Quite a number of prisoners were captured in this way.

Striking evidence of the extent of the enemy's defeat was provided by photographs of the huge piles of corpses that had to be soaked with petrol and burned. Another proof was provided by the booty that fell into Asensio's hands.

I remember a telephone conversation between Asensio and the Under-Secretary concerning the share the former should give up for the use of other fronts. Asensio, of course, wanted to keep the lot. Finally a compromise was reached. But Menendez had to haggle like an old woman at market, and that fine soldier, Asensio, behaved, in my opinion, much more like one of those party politicians who were always making absurd demands on us. But the Spanish civil war is full of such paradoxes.

It was difficult to keep one's bearings in this hectic atmosphere. I had always regarded the enormous influence of fiction in modern life as a very grave symptom. The huge hoardings advertising the cinema, which is the most thorough-going fiction of them all, seemed to me to epitomise our times. The continuous spoon-feeding of the public by the Press, the wireless, and the cinema leaves them no time for any genuine mental activity of their own. This to a great extent explains the disappearance of the critical spirit, the result of which is that the sword of Damocles hangs over Western civilisation to-day. The masses are gradually being transformed into ignorant

hordes, lacking all balance and critical sense, suspicious and credulous at the same time.

The first country to be afflicted by this disease was naturally the one most susceptible to it. I mean Spain. In Spain all life is lived through the imagination, and everyone obeys the impulses of his imagination. In other countries this is not so—in England, for example, imagination is the luxury of a select few, and even there it is a qualification that is not always looked on with favour. Throughout their history, alas! the Spaniards have been deficient in critical spirit, but in recent times their lack of it has been complete and the consequences have been catastrophic. Our national incapacity to analyse coolly the ideas of people who differ from us, that is to say, who form different images from our own, is the reason for the blind and ferocious intolerance which is the root cause of this appalling civil war.

It dawned on me, to my horror, that the images and impressions received at the War Ministry were so confusing and chaotic that a cold analysis of the war situation was impossible.

Orders were constantly given to attack. This filled me with dismay.

The commander of the militia at Talavera, which obviously lacked all organisation, received orders to attack Navalморal de la Mata. Lieutenant-Colonel Navarro, commander of the militia at Villanueva de la Serena, received orders to execute a big movement to join in this operation, etc. Everybody was ordered to attack every day.

What was the origin of these suicidal ideas? The answer is simply—imagination.

The idea of the Invincibility of the People, continually nourished, alas! by the newspapers, the smashing success at Peguerinos, the mirage, which both professional and amateur soldiers found irresistible, of the War of Movement as conducted by the

great captains of history, all united to cause my apprehensions to be ignored.

My analysis of the military situation was as follows :

The enemy's army was superior to ours, although we had more men. For lack of Spaniards the rebels had recruited Moors, Foreign Legionaries, Requetés, and Falangists.¹ Their superiority was due to their advantage in *matériel* and to the fact that they had a regular, disciplined army in the field.

Our militia had nothing but their enthusiasm ; they were deficient in everything else—officers, discipline, General Staff, etc. We had already had the bitter experience of our disastrous offensives at Huesca, Saragossa, Cordova, Granada, etc. The enemy, though inferior in numbers, had easily repulsed our gallant militiamen every time.

I had not forgotten the words written by Sanmartin, a Spaniard, before the War of 1870, though they were ignored by the leaders of that war, as they were by the leaders of the Great War. Sanmartin realised that the invention of automatic arms meant that at least ten battalions were needed to attack a position held by one, and that even they would have no easy task.

This and other considerations convinced me that we had no choice but to remain on the defensive. That meant digging ourselves in at the front and building up our war potential, which was much superior to that of the enemy, in the rear. In other words, our only possible policy was to entrench and to organise.

I never admitted the possibility of defeating the enemy in open battle, and I regarded a long war of position as inevitable. This I regarded, and still regard, as the policy by which the triumph of the people, of democracy, will be assured.

I also considered that the transformation of the war

¹ The Falange is the Spanish Fascist Party proper. It was very weak at the beginning of the war.

into a war of position, into trench warfare, would involve the final defeat of the military caste. As soon as trench warfare reached the stage of deadlock, Franco and company would be defeated, for, with the disappearance of the prospect of a short and rapid struggle such as they had 'imagined' and elaborately prepared for, all their advantages would be gone. Once a continuous front, hundreds of miles in length, had been established, both sides would be compelled to mobilise their populations. That task offered no difficulties whatever to the Republicans ; to the rebels it would possibly be an insuperable task. Moreover, with both sides mobilised, the real decision would lie with the civil populations on both sides, the majority of whom detested the war and the extremists of both camps, but primarily the extremists of the Right who had started the war.

Later, when I re-examined this analysis in the light of events, I realised that I was as far astray as those who believed they could end the war quickly by losing no opportunity of offering battle. All our calculations were upset by foreign intervention, German and Italian, the possibility of which had never occurred to us. Without German and Italian aid the rebels would never have been able to mobilise their civil population. Without German and Italian aid, in men and, above all, in *matériel*, they would have succumbed, perhaps before three months were out, to the reckless heroism of our militiamen.

Meanwhile the intervention of German and Italian machines on the Talavera front, where we had not a single fighter or anti-aircraft gun, transformed all our ill-advised offensives into defeats.

On the night of September 2, we invited Major Gonzalez Muñoz, second-in-command to Mangada, to

the Ministry. He acted as Mangada's chief of staff, and whenever we appealed to him we found his co-operation invaluable. As a result of our talk with him it was decided that Mangada should detach a small force of about a thousand men from his main body for the defence of the Puerto del Pico. This was a key position. If we had held it we could have prevented the rebel forces coming from the North from effecting a junction with those marching against Talavera. The defence and fortification of the Puerto del Pico had been an obsession with me ever since the beginning of the war, but owing to lack of resources we had never been able to manage it. On the morning of September 3, a small detachment took up its position on the top of the col, which was easy to defend because of its precipitous slopes.

The night that followed was truly historic. One piece of disastrous news poured in after another. Talavera fell, then Irún. Then we were overwhelmed with appeals for help from the Tagus front. The Puerto del Pico fell to the enemy without any serious resistance being offered. Mangada had taken the opportunity of ridding his column of Anarchists and members of the CNT. As usual, these people showed themselves incapable of any real grit.

For the first time since the beginning of the war Lieutenant-Colonel Saravia, generally so calm and courageous, but now physically exhausted by weeks of insufficient sleep, showed signs of cracking under the strain. Moreover, Menendez was in a similar state. Besides, a Government crisis was in progress, and they knew that they were no longer Minister and Under-Secretary respectively.

The situation seemed desperate. No further men or *matériel* were forthcoming in Madrid. Saravia and Menendez had come to the end of their tether and did nothing, and, indeed, it seemed as though nothing could be done.

At half-past three in the morning they gave me permission to act. "All right, carry on, do your best," they said.

I left the Ministry and went to see Major Hidalgo de Cisneros at the Air Department.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I have come to inform you that both the Minister and the Under-Secretary have reached the end of their resources. They have cracked. I want you to leave this Department and come with me to the Ministry to replace them. It is necessary to withdraw forces from the Sierra, and I do not want to take the entire responsibility for such an important decision myself."

He rang up the Alto de Leon and asked to speak to Colonel Asensio immediately. He was told that the colonel was asleep. "Never mind," he said, "send him to the telephone at once. . . ."

"Is that Colonel Asensio?"

"Colonel Asensio speaking. Who is that?"

"This is Hidalgo de Cisneros, speaking from the Ministry of War. Please get into a car and come here at once!"

Asensio appeared a little later. Saravia, who gave his approval to our plans, sat up on the couch on which he was lying and said:

"In view of the gravity of the situation we call on you to try to withdraw five to six thousand men from the Sierra front this morning and transfer them to the Tagus front immediately. Cisneros and Martín will help you to give the necessary orders. You are appointed general officer commanding all the forces on all the fronts round Madrid. Your promotion will certainly be my last act as Minister of War."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Caballero Minister of War

DURING Saravia's last days at the War Ministry I had many opportunities of talking to Major Estrada, chief of the Intelligence Department, and to Arias, who had been a colleague of mine in the militia office and was now organising the espionage and counter-espionage services for the Intelligence Department.

In their view, the two most urgent needs were the enforcement of discipline and a unified command. Neither of these could be attained, in their opinion, with Saravia and Menendez at the War Ministry. These two did not belong to any working-class organisation, being merely enthusiastic followers of Azaña, and it was essential to make Largo Caballero War Minister, for no one other than he could hope to impose discipline on the many thousands of militiamen, the great majority of whom were workers.

This view was in accordance with that generally held in Madrid. So united was public opinion that, without any signs of a crisis, Señor Giral handed over the reins of government to Largo Caballero, who thus became Prime Minister and Minister of War.

When the new Minister arrived at the office, accompanied by the new Under-Secretary of State, he found us working as usual. Saravia and Menendez knew that they had been dropped, but we were all three so absorbed by the many exigencies of war that

we had given no thought to the change of government. When Caballero entered we left our telephones and telegrams to go through the traditional routine introductions. The usual speeches were made, but they were so formal that I have preserved no memory of them.

Caballero's first instructions were to have the table with the many telephones removed from his office, together with all the maps and plans which were piled on it. We were asked not to enter his office except when he sent for us. We therefore removed all our papers to the next room, which had served as the office of the technical secretariat in the early days. Saravia and Menendez took their papers, too, but found an opportunity of exchanging a few words with me before they left. One of them, I don't remember which one, said :

" You're staying here, Martín. Please see that they don't forget us. Do what you can to see that we're given some sort of work, even if it's only the command of a battery or a battalion. If we're compelled to stay at home without doing anything, we shall go mad, particularly while there's such a desperate need of loyal officers."

" Have you gone out of your senses ? " I replied. " Don't be absurd ! How could they possibly dispense with the services of the two best officers of the Republic ? "

" Martín, one can see that you are very young. Don't you know that Caballero dislikes us and doesn't want to have anything to do with us, because we were Azaña's aides-de-camp while he was War Minister ? Caballero knows that we are closely connected with the President, and therefore with Prieto."

" I refuse to believe you. Caballero can't be as narrow as that, with Yagüe nearly at the gates of Madrid."

Only a few days later Cerdón and I learned that

Saravia and Menendez were in danger. Some of the armed men who remained snugly in Madrid and spent their time murdering officers of the old army had discovered that these two were spending their time unoccupied at home. They concluded that they must be rebels and attempted to take them away. Córdón and I intervened with the new Under-Secretary and appealed to him to give them some employment. The result was they were sent to Montoro, the headquarters of the Cordova front.¹

I was sent for by Major Estrada, who showed me the first decree signed by Caballero as Minister of War. It had undoubtedly been drafted before the Cabinet reshuffle with the help of Estrada himself. It dealt with the creation of a General Staff, which started to function immediately.

The Minister of War was appointed commander-in-chief of all the armies in the field, but he delegated his powers to the Chief of the General Staff. Major Estrada was appointed to fill this vital position, while Major Alonso was appointed chief of the operations section and myself chief of the supplies section. The few officers of all ranks at our disposal were distributed between the various sections. Córdón was posted to the operations section and Nuñez to the Air Force administration, which was attached to the Ministry of Marine. The latter was in charge of Don Indalecio Prieto, who was now entitled Air Minister and Minister of Marine.

I handed over to Estrada all the papers and documents which concerned him as Chief of Staff, and suggested that Córdón and I should remain in the

¹ Saravia was promoted to the rank of general by Indalecio Prieto when the latter was War Minister and, in December 1937, commanded the forces which took Teruel.

office and not begin our new duties until the new Under-Secretariat knew the ropes and could get along without us.

At 2 a.m. I was summoned to the office of the Chief of Staff, for a conference. After an analysis of the military situation, we proceeded to draw up a schedule of our various duties, in order to prevent confusion and overlapping.

The analysis of the military situation was carried out with so much realism, common sense, and simplicity that I was genuinely relieved and surprised. I found it most encouraging. The confidence that all my colleagues seemed to derive from taking part in a staff conference at which common sense and realism prevailed gave me an additional sense of reassurance. All we had learned in the textbooks had gone by the board. Under the impact of the tragedy about us, we had discovered that the old methods were out of date. We had to rely on our own efforts and our own initiative, using whatever tools we had available and facing things as they were.

The first conclusion that we drew was that we must face the indisputable fact that the fighting that was now beginning was entirely different from the fighting that had been taking place in the Sierra. This was partly because the terrain of the Tagus valley was very different from the rocky and precipitous slopes of the Guadarrama, but primarily because we were confronted with a different enemy. We were no longer confronted with Mola's Requetés, but with Moors and Foreign Legionaries, first-rate soldiers organised into motorised columns, fully officered, amply provided with machine-guns and artillery, and supported by aircraft fresh from the factories of Italy and Germany. We were short of

machine-guns, ammunition, artillery, officers, and almost completely devoid of aircraft. All we could count on was popular enthusiasm, the justice of our cause, and now a General Staff.

I no longer remember who it was, but one of us, with the simplicity of a Castilian peasant stoically philosophising about the poverty of his parched fields, described the thing that was uppermost in all our minds. Never in history, he pointed out, had enthusiasm availed so little as in this machine age. It was our task to do our best to convince the political leaders that it was impossible to resist a regular army with popular enthusiasm alone, and that therefore their support must be enlisted on our behalf. Twenty thousand Mexican rifles had been landed at Alicante that afternoon, but he would willingly sacrifice them all, together with twenty thousand enthusiastic militiamen, for twenty fighter aeroplanes, of which we had not a single one. The tradition of the defeat of the professional soldiery of the Old Régime by the people of Paris was still far too vivid in Spanish Republican minds. "Just think what a difference it would have made to the history of France, the history of the world, if Louis XVI had had a few tanks, machine-guns, and bombers at his disposal," he said. "A modern army can only be resisted by another modern army, and the chief aim which we must bear in mind in all our work must be the creation of the New Army of the Republic."

In these circumstances we had no need to rack our brains devising elaborate strategical plans. Strange to say, the impressive word 'strategy' was not used once throughout the conference. Our task was to contest every inch of ground, sacrificing the lives of our militiamen to gain time for war material to arrive. Where it would come from we did not know, but we were confident it would come from somewhere. It seemed inconceivable that the world would allow

Germany and Italy to gain control of the Peninsula, the strategical key to Europe in the event of a European war.

In the course of our discussion of the problem of establishing defensive positions behind our front lines, an officer whose name and rank I did not know—he was in mufti like the rest—made a statement which was as baffling as it was important.

“This war,” he said, “is a war of fortifications, like the Great War, but the difference is that this time a third element, the air, has to be taken into account.”

This, alas ! meant another big handicap. As I have said, we had no anti-aircraft guns and not a single fighter. We were confident that somehow we should get them in the end, and that we had no alternative but to go on sacrificing the lives of our militiamen to gain time until they should arrive ; we had no alternative but to demand the most supreme heroism of them and the most unhesitating willingness to lay down their lives, and we were prepared, if necessary, to make examples of those who could not stand the strain of the continual unopposed bombings by German and Italian 'planes, ' to the everlasting shame of the democratic nations who delay sending us arms with the help of which we could defend their security and the peace of Europe.'

When the meeting was over I remained behind and had a few words alone with the Chief of Staff concerning my own position. I told him frankly that I was utterly exhausted as the result of my work at the Ministry under Saravia, and that I needed a few days' complete rest. Moreover, I told him that I did not relish the prospect of becoming the head of a section all the officers of which were my superiors in rank ; also, the section's primary job being the handling of transport, which was in the hands of the trade unions, and my efforts to militarise the transport service

having failed, it would be awkward for me to have to work with the unions, who were well aware of my differences of opinion with them.

I added that the most important part of the section's duties consisted in distributing to the armies the *matériel* and supplies put at their disposal by the central administration, in other words, by the Ministry, and that it was therefore up to the Ministry to find them. The Ministry's task was the organisation of the economic arm and the mobilisation of industry. Both the Minister and his Under-Secretary had no knowledge of these vital problems, to the study of which I had devoted the last ten years of my life. I therefore suggested that it would be more useful if I remained at the Under-Secretariat, which was my own creation ; moreover I would like Cordon to remain with me instead of being posted to the operations section.

Estrada very graciously gave his consent to these proposals, only expressing his regret at losing my services.

"What do you think of the personnel of our brand-new Staff?" he asked me as I took my leave.

"Splendid!" I replied. "Absolutely first-class. The great thing is their spirit of realism and common sense, which is so rare among general staffs."

I could not help comparing them to the typical staffs of our old army. It reminded me of something that Saravia once said. Saravia's resourcefulness was inexhaustible. One day one of the Ministers said our position was hopeless because we had no staff officers. 'But don't you realise that that is our great strength, my dear colleague?' Saravia replied. 'The only reason why Franco and Mola are not yet in Madrid to wipe us all out is that they have a staff, composed of wise and bearded gentlemen who spent the four years of the Great War at the military club, working out plans for the annihilation of the French!'

“ Don't you think we may have been a little too pessimistic in our analysis of the situation ? ”

“ Possibly, in some respects. But on the whole it was healthy and we must stick to it. Good night, sir. Finally, may I remind you of some words once spoken by a beggar of Avila. ‘ Happy those priests and soldiers who do not seek for the explanations of things.’ ”

Don Manuel Azaña had been the Republic's first War Minister. I was told by a friend that at the meetings of the revolutionary committee which proclaimed the Republic he outlined an army policy which made it clear that he had thoroughly studied the subject.

After the Great War, which he had observed as a newspaper correspondent, he had published numerous articles dealing with French military policy from the days of the Dreyfus case down to 1918. In these articles he showed both his desire to democratise the Spanish Army and his marked sympathy for the ideas of Jean Jaurès.

As the Spanish politicians (with the exception of Count Romanones, who was several times Prime Minister) had never taken any interest in army problems, the revolutionary committee was agreeably surprised to discover in its midst a man with clear ideas on this important matter. But Azaña's appointment as War Minister was a bitter blow to General Queipo de Llano, who was then an out-and-out Republican and had hoped to secure that important office for himself. Queipo's hatred of Azaña dated from that time, though I was assured by my informant that even without Azaña it would never have occurred to the Republicans to appoint such an obviously third-rate personality to the Ministry of War.

Azaña's well-known military reforms were received by the nation with great satisfaction. All Spaniards capable of forming a sober judgment welcomed them as a return to sobriety after a hideous nightmare. The state of the Spanish Army was such that no patriotic Spaniard could fail to be apprehensive. Time after time it had been defeated by a handful of Rifis, who lacked modern arms ; yet it had no fewer than eight hundred generals, active, on half-pay, and retired, and twenty-two thousand officers—one for every five men.

Everybody remembered the policy that had been pursued in the reign of King Alfonso, when these thousands of officers, with the King's connivance, had constantly come into collision with the civil administration. This multitude of officers, whose pay swallowed up almost the whole of the military budget, was the consequence of many colonial and civil wars. They were naturally always dissatisfied at the inevitable slowness of their promotion, and in the days of the monarchy nearly every Government had been guilty of throwing them a sop by appointing senior officers to sinecures and thus facilitating promotion. Under the monarchy irresponsibility of this kind was the normal thing. Whenever the public forces and the administration came into conflict, recourse was always had to the same expedient. The nation could always foot the bill !

Don Antonio Maura, a reactionary in politics, but an honest and upright man, when asked his advice during a ministerial crisis, once said to the King : "Let those govern the country who never allow it to be governed !" He meant the King and the army, the anarchy at the head of the State itself.

No War Minister before Azaña had ever aimed at creating an efficient army ; they had all been too busy changing army uniforms and playing general post

with the promotion list, processes which went by the pompous name of 'military reforms,'

*Siendo una de las mas famosas
La del ilustre General Linares
Que en ellas disminuye tres cornetas
Y aumenta diez generales.¹*

Azaña's reforms resulted in the generals being reduced to eighty-seven and the officers to about twelve thousand. The remainder were retired on full pay. The number of divisions was reduced from sixteen to eight. Thenceforward church parades were no longer obligatory. The ranks of captain-general and lieutenant-general were abolished, and with them their purely nominal functions, which consisted of wearing resplendent uniforms and exercising authority over unarmed barracks without troops, occupied only by a few other officers. The various military industries were merged into a single unit subject to the rules of the Commercial Code, and forced to keep proper accounts to prevent the wastage of public funds.

Azaña's policy was sensible and reasonable and created a foundation on which an efficient army might have been built up. The economies resulting from the retirement of superfluous officers and the abolition of sinecures would have permitted improvements in equipment and the development of armament factories.

But Azaña's eyes were so much fixed upon the necessity of creating a new spirit in army affairs, and breaking away from that of his predecessors, that he did not dare to ask for increased credits to supply the army with the necessary equipment. Without the latter, however, it was destined to remain as inefficient

¹ One of the most famous being that of the illustrious General Linares, who shortened the active list by three ensigns and lengthened it by ten generals.

as it had been before. But Azaña was firmly convinced that the efficiency of an army depends more on its potential than on its actual armament ; in other words, that the best way of increasing the efficiency of the Spanish army was to devote public funds to the promotion of the general prosperity of the nation rather than to the purchase of war material which would rapidly grow obsolete.

As might have been expected, this policy, based on his genuine conviction that the Spanish people had common sense, turned out to be disastrous.

Azaña had gone into politics after a long life devoted to his own spiritual perfection. The general immorality of Spanish politics had pained him deeply, and in his own political decisions he was obsessed with the ideal of absolute integrity. He wished to break away completely from the coarse and brutal immorality of the politicians of the monarchy.

Such an attitude would have been pardonable in a writer or a university professor. In Spanish politics it was wholly out of place. Don Antonio Maura had already failed in a similar attempt. In Spain Don Quixote is always stoned by the goatherds and fooled by the nobility.

Azaña's moral outlook made him incapable of understanding that our period resembles the period of absolute monarchies, which preserved their power with a force of picked troops against whom it was useless and impossible to rise. The times when government could be based on democracy were very short. But to try to consolidate a Republican régime in Spain, at a moment of acute political tension, relying only upon the moral force of Spanish democracy, was madness. That, however, is a truth which Azaña's obsolete faith in Liberalism prevented him from foreseeing or even understanding.

But it is only just to point out that in this respect all the Republican leaders were birds of a feather.

They were lineal descendants of the Spaniards who first launched the word 'liberalism' into the vocabulary of Europe.

It is a great pity that Azaña's military reforms were inspired by the obsolete idea of democratising the army. A Praetorian Guard for the defence of the Republic, though the notion is little to my liking, would have been far more useful. If it had consisted of picked men, from general to drummer-boy, it would have mattered little if it had consisted of only one division if there had been no money for more. One good division is worth a dozen bad ones. It could have had its own tank corps and air force, and every man could have been chosen for his unwavering loyalty to the Republic. A strong air force, loyal to the Republic, was and still is an absolute necessity for Spain.

At the time of the foundation of the Republic the problem of compulsorily retiring the thousands of surplus officers would have been an easy one to solve. The people and the soldiery were fraternising, the officers' influence was reduced to zero, and they accepted Azaña's reforms without the slightest resistance. The monarchist and politically indifferent officers could have been dismissed and only the loyal Republicans retained, and the whole operation could have been carried out without the slightest risk; and once the Praetorian Guard of the Republic had been formed it would have been impossible for the officers to revolt.

I must point out that these ideas of mine preceded this terrible war. I formed them in my schooldays, and I have preserved them ever since. I formed them when I first realised that in Spain the honest majority of decent, hard-working people are threatened on all sides by Carlists, i.e. survivors from the Middle Ages whose mentality only dynamite could change, by Anarchists in word and deed, under-nourished both

mentally and physically, and venerable Krausist¹ professors who derived their spiritual nourishment from translations from the German.

All these hated and despised the ordinary decent citizens who gave the Republic its majority in 1931, hoping that it would chase away the nightmares that had haunted Spanish history for so long. But before it could hope to realise the Spanish people's aspirations, the Republic should have created an infallible and automatic instrument of coercion which would have taught the imprudent the inadvisability of taking liberties with the power of the State.

Nevertheless, Azaña's reforms, whether wise or unwise, effective or ineffective, were the result of serious thought and study, and constituted a coherent policy. The premiers who succeeded him, Alexander Lerroux, Gil Robles, Casares Quiroga, all undertook the duties of War Minister as well. But as none of them had any understanding of military problems, they achieved nothing whatsoever. It was notorious that their motive in coupling the premiership with the War Ministry was imitation of Azaña, strange as this may seem in the case of Lerroux and Gil Robles, his bitter personal enemies.

When Largo Caballero formed his Government, his motive in taking over the War Ministry was exactly the same. From the first moment, however, his complete and absolute lack of preparation for his task was painfully evident, and it was clear that he had not the slightest idea of military problems.

True, those who knew him would have been greatly astonished if he had turned out to be an organising

¹ The doctrines of Krause, a particularly pedantic version of early nineteenth-century German idealism, penetrated to Spain about 1840 and became a sort of official philosophy.

genius. But the incapacity that he immediately revealed was such as to produce the gravest concern. I made no attempt to conceal my own feelings on the subject. When I told a friend what I thought of Caballero, he replied :

“ Yes, no doubt what you say is true. But unfortunately his prestige among the working masses makes him the only person capable of imposing discipline and unity of command.”

Caballero had been Minister of Labour during the first two years of the Republic, and the one thing that experience taught him, in my opinion, was that it is very easy indeed to be a Minister. Ministries always have a competent personnel, capable of dealing with any situation that arises, and can solve all a Minister's problems for him. All he has to do is to sign the documents that are placed before him, and, just when he is beginning to learn a little about the work of his department, a Cabinet shuffle takes place and he is suddenly shifted, perhaps, from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Public Works or the Ministry of Marine. But, unfortunately, when the leader of the Revolutionary Left of the Spanish Socialist Party went to the War Ministry, none of this comfortable routine existed. Here everything had to be created out of nothing ; a ministry, an army, the mobilisation of industry, etc. etc. This task required a man of youthful energy and creative spirit. But even the blindest could see that Caballero was not of this type. Friends and acquaintances frequently said to me in my office :

“ But doesn't this man realise that it is a crime for him to occupy a position on which the life and death of the Republic depends while there are others with the necessary creative gifts ? ”

This was, of course, an allusion to Indalecio Prieto.

One afternoon, at the time of the Constituent Assembly, a discussion (in which Don Miguel Unamuno

took part) took place at the Ateneo concerning General Franco's farewell speech to his cadets at the Military Academy of Saragossa. Franco was the director of this Academy when its doors were closed by Azaña and special military schools were organised instead.

"Discipline is hardly ever properly understood or properly defined," Franco had said. "There is no merit in discipline . . . when the orders one is given are agreeable and easy to carry out. The true significance of discipline . . . is seen when our private judgment bids us do the exact opposite of what we are ordered, and our heart struggles and secretly revolts against what seems to be the arbitrary exercise of mistaken authority. That is the discipline we have tried to inculcate into you. That is the example we are giving you."

One of us remarked that, if General Franco had really had such a high idea of discipline he would never have made that speech, which was criticism of a Government measure delivered under the guise of a moral exhortation to seven hundred cadets. It could hardly be described as a disciplined action on the part of a general on the active list. No doubt the closing of the Academy of Saragossa and its replacement by special schools was very unwelcome to Franco and the military caste in general, but the Government acted wisely in enforcing the specialisation which modern war material demands, and in stopping the endless production of officers of whom there was already such a considerable excess.

"This exaltation of the virtue of blind discipline and obedience to orders, even mistaken orders," Unamuno remarked, "is certainly a novelty in Spain, where the gods have given us such lofty ideas about the importance of our private egos. The word discipline derives from 'disciple,' one who studies and attempts to follow the moral instruction of another. But one thing our officers have never known is that

the best-disciplined armies have been those whose generals have made the officers and men below them understand."

How often have these words of Unamuno's occurred to me during the civil war! Meanwhile all the world repeated that "Caballero alone could impose discipline, and without discipline one could not make war."

What will Caballero do to impose discipline? I said to myself. After all, he will have to do something. He can't sit in his office all day long and wait for discipline to fall from the skies. He can't confine himself to preventing all-comers from entering his office, and sending away anyone who does get in with a flea in his ear!

Fortunately once more Spain continued to be Spain, and the Spanish people, as usual, rose superior to their leaders. Discipline was enforced by the militiamen themselves, after they had had to clamour for it vainly for a long time. They demanded it, not because they liked it, but because they had been taught by bitter necessity, in the midst of Armageddon, what no school or academy could have taught them, namely, that without it they would be lost. They demanded discipline in the same fashion as they demanded reinforcements and ammunition.

Often an emissary would come to the Ministry on behalf of a column of militia at the front.

"Well, comrade, what brings you here?"

"My column sent me to ask you to send us a senior officer and a few junior officers to impose discipline."

"But, good heavens, isn't there any discipline in your column, comrade? Do you mean to say that everybody in your column does what he likes?"

"No, comrade, it isn't that. It's my fault, I'm sorry I can't express myself better. We are disciplined, and everybody does his duty. But we want officers, professional soldiers, to lead us and show us

what to do, because they are the experts, the technicians of war."

The militiamen had understood. In order to enforce discipline, it was necessary to teach, to create, to organise, and above all to administer wisely the precious resources that loyal Spain placed unreservedly in the Government's hands—the enthusiasm of the people and the blood that they offered without stint. This uncommon enterprise needed not the leader of a revolutionary party, but a true patriot, endowed with exceptional creative gifts, capable of ignoring and rising superior to the party struggles of the past.

The Communist Party must be granted the credit of having set the example in accepting discipline. By so doing it enormously increased not only its prestige, but its numbers. Innumerable men who wished to enlist and fight for their country joined the Communist Party.

If often happened that, when I came across a man who was just leaving for the front, I asked him :

"But why did you join the Communist Party? You were never a Communist, were you? You were always a Republican."

"I joined the Communists because they are disciplined and do their job better than anybody else," was the answer.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Economic Mobilisation

THE new Under-Secretary, Lieutenant-Colonel Rodrigo Gil of the Artillery, had been the hero of the storming of the Montaña Barracks. He left the command of the Madrid Artillery Park to become the right-hand man of Caballero, whose personal and political associate he had been for many years.

During the six weeks he occupied this position, his fatherly kindness and care for his subordinates repeatedly surprised me. I always think of him as a man 'too good for words.' But that trite and commonplace expression is inadequate; there is something exceptional about Don Rodrigo. Scrupulous in all his decisions, possessing the patience of a saint, unhesitatingly loyal and frank, he inspired affection and devotion. He was an infinitely good man. Never in my life have I met his like.

He possessed common sense and intelligence, and was regarded as one of the most outstanding personalities in the Artillery Corps, in which he enjoyed a high reputation. During the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, who hated the Artillery Corps, he lived abroad, in exile, supporting himself either as a mathematician or as a chemist, I do not remember which. But I know that on one or other of those subjects he was a recognised authority.

Unfortunately he had no organising ability, and this was the one thing needed for the creation of a

new army. Also his knowledge of military matters as a whole was limited, though he was an expert at his own arm, the artillery. When he was faced with anything that was not a gun, he was lost. Not only was he unable to act, but, worse still, he was unable to allow others to act.

Cordón and I tormented him unceasingly. At 9.30 a.m., when he left the Minister, we started putting the problems of the day before him, together with our suggested solutions, giving him full explanations. His common sense helped him to grasp what we submitted to him, and even sometimes to suggest improvements. We always submitted the easiest and most pressing matters first. But as soon as we passed on to problems of larger scope his powers of assimilation gave out, and he would find it impossible to follow. But urgent problems, all demanding immediate attention, piled up remorselessly, and Cordón and I harried him mercilessly, not allowing him a moment's respite. Like a martyr, the sweat pouring from his brow, he submitted to our will. Had the position not been so serious, watching the worthy old gentleman trying to dodge work like a lazy schoolboy would have been extremely funny.

"Excuse me, Martín" or: "Excuse me, Cordón," he would say, "but I'm afraid we must stop. The Minister wants me."

As soon as he came out of the Minister's room we would pounce on him again, even if he pretended he had some work to do for Caballero. As soon as we had finished with one thing, we would bring up the next.

"Excuse me," he would say again, "I am afraid we shall have to stop. I have to receive such-and-such a Deputy. We shall resume later."

Whenever the telephone rang, although it was usually to announce some bad news, he was immensely relieved, because it meant a moment's relief.

"We shall resume after dinner to-night, when there'll be peace and quiet," he would promise us. But after dinner the same thing always happened. The processes of digestion, and lack of sleep combined with the excitements of the day, left him fit for nothing but bed.

Cordón and I alternated on night-duty. Our efforts to work with the Under-Secretary always failed. There being no hope of his getting through all the work, we would merely force the most pressing things upon his attention. As soon as we saw that it was hopeless to try to continue, we packed him off to bed. Next morning we would wake him one hour before the time came for him to submit the documents to the Minister for signature, and we would prepare him for his 'exam' by going through two or three of the most urgent matters with him. At half-past eight, he would enter the Minister's room, trembling like a schoolboy going to see the headmaster. At half-past nine he emerged again.

Don Francisco Largo Caballero, Prime Minister and Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of all the armies in the field, went to bed at ten o'clock at night and got up at eight next morning, and whatever happened the old revolutionary's sleep must not be disturbed. From 8.30 to 9.30 a.m. he signed papers, and outside those hours he would sign nothing whatever.

"Listen, colonel," I would say, "this order must be dispatched without a moment's delay. You must go to the Minister's office and get his signature at once."

"You don't know Caballero," he would reply. "I dare not submit anything to him now, particularly anything as complicated as that. I agree that it's urgent, but you must wait till to-morrow."

"Colonel, it would be useful to remind the Minister that there happens to be a war on. He can easily convince himself of the fact by leaning out of the

window and watching the Fascist aeroplanes manœuvring over Madrid ! ”

“ All power to the proletariat,” said Largo Caballero, splitting the Socialist Party under the slogan of working-class unity, i.e. the unity of Socialists and Communists and Anarchists and Syndicalists. The latter, however, continued their internecine strife without paying any attention to him. Instead of working-class unity, Caballero only succeeded in dividing the Socialist Party, the unity of which might have prevented the military insurrection.

How many times, when Largo’s incapacity was crying aloud to heaven, did I not ask myself why this man wanted ‘ all power for the proletariat,’ in other words, for himself. Is he not the very opposite of a creator, an organiser ? I imagined, rightly or wrongly, that if the proletariat had all the power in its hands, things would be even more difficult than they were now, and a still greater genius than was needed now would be needed to direct the war. Meanwhile, it was only thanks to the enthusiasm of the great majority of the Spanish people, who hated all dictatorships, including the dictatorship of the proletariat, that it was possible to hold out at all.

One day the reinforcements arrived whom Saravia had requested from Barcelona during the last days of his term of office, in view of the gravity of the situation at Talavera de la Reina, and on the Tagus front. The column consisted of three or four thousand Anarcho-Syndicalists who had fought in the Balearics. No sooner had they arrived when trouble arose over their requirements. Other far more important matters had to be neglected in order to provide them with suitable billets and victuals. Our policy was to give in to them and let them have any-

thing they wanted, provided only we could get them to the Tagus front. But nobody could get them out of Madrid. They crowded the streets, flaunting the Anarchist colours everywhere, or drove about in luxurious cars with stupid and absurd lettering on them.

When bad news came from the front, everybody always asked the same question: "What about the CNT column? When are they going into the firing-line?"

"They have promised to go to-morrow."

Many morrows passed before they went.

They lived in the best hotels, with a bathroom attached to every room. When they went, it was not because of any 'discipline' imposed by Largo Caballero, the leader of the 'united proletariat,' but because the people of Madrid made life impossible for them. The Madrileños had lost patience with base-line heroism, and nearly hissed them in the streets.

The Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalist is a phenomenon difficult to describe. But observation of any individual having the Anarchist mentality, even if he does not belong to the Anarchist movement, will make the phenomenon intelligible. Such a person may belong to the Right, the Left or the Centre. He may be able to read and write, and he may even exercise those faculties. He may even exercise a liberal profession, and hold a high position in society. But he will lack mental discipline, capacity for logical thought, and, above all, he will lack conscience. He will like repeating things by rote, inventing sonorous phrases, and by dint of unthinkingly repeating them will end by actually believing them himself. Nothing has contributed so much to the increase of mental Anarchism all over the world as the Press, which saves everybody the trouble of thinking for himself.

Knowing this type of mentality, one can have nothing but the greatest pity for the pure type of Spanish Anarchist, who is a geographical product. He is a son of the Spanish steppes, and of the defects of

Spanish society. Spain produces Anarchists for the same reasons that she produces beggars, adventurers, and monks. But the present epidemic of Anarchism is primarily due to the European War.

Life in Spain, as I knew it as a boy, was extremely impoverished. At Avila, a town of fourteen thousand inhabitants, and capital of a province, an enterprising capitalist opened a magnificent bar, but he very soon had to close it, for lack of custom. Its opening was quite an event. When we boys came out of school at noon, we stood gaping with admiration in front of the glittering place. Late in the afternoon, a group of officers, instructors at the Military Academy, would drop in for a glass of beer there. But the only regular customer was Pepe Paz, a young gentleman of twenty, whose parents had just left him the most considerable fortune of the province. He was always alone. Outside, in the Gran Plaza, a servant would wait, holding Pepe's white horse, saddled in the Andalusian fashion. It was such a fine horse that we always stopped and admired it, hoping that Pepe would come out and mount it. When his parents died and left him wealthy, his first act had been to buy this horse from Miura's stables in Seville—and to become a customer at the bar. But he was the only person in Avila who could afford a glass of beer before dinner every day.

By the time the Great War ended, however, there were about twenty bars in Avila, and they were always crowded. Nevertheless, the Castilian provinces such as that of Avila profited least from the European butchery, though they, too, sold everything they could to France, mostly cattle, for which they pocketed fabulous prices. Thus it was not surprising that there were many disconsolate faces in November 1918, and people who exclaimed: "What swine these Germans are! Now they are suing for an armistice!"

The exodus from the country to the towns took

place on a larger and more disastrous scale in Spain than anywhere else. Only the real stoics among the peasants, only the most self-denying, could possibly resist the attraction of the big towns during the European War. Pay in the country-side, or at least in the dry-farming regions where on most days of the year it was impossible to work, remained as low as 1 or 1.50 pesetas a day, while in the towns the same people could earn 15, 20 or even 30 pesetas a day. Miners, factory workers, and dock labourers drank champagne and wore silk socks. The labourer who left his village for the town could be sure of finding work and of earning more money than his village doctor, the only human being he had ever seen who wore a collar and a tie.

But then came the post-War years, and with rapidly sinking foreign purchases the economic life of Spain could not be maintained at the same level. The lean years came after the fat ones, but the labourers could not return to the fields and take the plough, nor could they be satisfied with earning two pesetas a day. They had all grown used to taking an *apéritif* before dinner, just like Pepe Paz. Barcelona, which had half a million inhabitants before the War, now had more than a million, and all its workers were Syndicalists led by Anarchists.

Thus thousands upon thousands of labourers left the fields, where they had lived in the most appalling poverty for centuries. If wages in the country-side were and are so wretched, it is primarily due to the unproductiveness of eighty-five per cent of the soil of Spain, which is deficient in water, parched by the torrid sun in summer, and frozen by icy cold in winter. Most of the labourers were illiterate. In their bars and cafés they listened to subversive speeches. They forgot the rigid codes and conventions of their village life, and acquired new wants so strong that in their pursuit they did not shrink from resorting to arms.

Illiteracy was the chief reason why the Spanish workers were politically the most backward in Europe, the only ones who flocked in thousands to Anarchist meetings. Out of curiosity I attended several of these meetings. They reminded me of nothing so much as the news-reel pictures I have seen of scenes in Algeria, showing people preaching red revolution to audiences consisting mainly of children, who cheer and laugh without understanding or even listening to what the speaker has to say.

During the war, especially during my days in the militia department, I came into frequent contact with these people. I at once saw that it was useless to argue with them, because they talked a different language. They were neither evil nor hostile, but merely extraordinarily unintelligent. Their minds were closed to all reason, and I was never able to make them understand the simplest thing.

Whenever one explained something or gave some order to a militiaman and found oneself surprised at his dullness, one would be sure to discover later that he was an Anarcho-Syndicalist. Such stupidity made one understand why foreigners sometimes leave Spain with the impression that Spaniards are unintelligent. For this they find a simple explanation in the theory that a process of negative selection has been at work, namely, that for four whole centuries all the intelligent persons having either been burned alive by the Holy Inquisition or having entered the Church, only the unintelligent were able to propagate their kind. But as a matter of fact Spain, like every other country, has people of all sorts, as it has geography of all sorts. But if a foreigner makes contact with Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalists, he will certainly find confirmation for his view that the Spaniards are stupid.

Though the general atmosphere of Spanish Syndicalism is one of unintelligence, isolated persons of

great intelligence and shrewdness are to be found among its adherents, as well as sentimental idealists who weep with emotion when they contemplate the beauty of the Anarchist paradise, where all mankind will be so virtuous that there will be no more need for laws, Civil Guards or 'filthy lucre.'

Among the latter are many agreeable and human people, with whom it is possible to talk without fearing every minute that they will brandish a revolver at you.

I remember one of them who came and applied for a hundred rifles on behalf of an Anarchist group.

"Listen, comrade," I told him. "In the first place I can't give you any rifles because I haven't got any. But, quite apart from that, we have to form an army, and we can only give rifles to those who are prepared to accept military discipline. You're a good fellow and must understand that."

"Yes, comrade, you're quite right. We have no discipline."

"Of course not. Otherwise you wouldn't be Anarchists. Do you know why the rebel generals, Queipo and Cabanellas, won so easily in the strongholds of the Anarchist movement, Seville and Saragossa? Do you know why the Anarchists were unable to crush the military insurrection?"

"Yes, comrade, because we have no discipline. Don't think I'm so stupid as not to understand. Queipo and Cabanellas won because we had no discipline, and killed thousands of our comrades. I know that in war there must be discipline, and I've already told the comrades from my group that if they don't change their ways I'll go over to the Communists, or to the Aragon front, to Durruti, who said: 'We must renounce everything but victory.'"

But immoral advocates of violence, men of the *pistolero* type, continued to prevail among the Anarcho-Syndicalists. They shared in the general

illusion that the rising was no more than an ordinary *pronunciamento*, their fixed idea being that the chief danger to them was from the Communists. They believed that, as soon as the generals had been defeated, the Communists would turn on them and try to exterminate them as if they had been mad dogs. They therefore devoted themselves to amassing stores of arms, which they kept in the Europa Cinema and in a building in the Calle de Clavel. To secure these arms they resorted to their classical expedient—violence. Convoys of munitions, which had been assembled with the greatest difficulty and were destined for the firing-line, were repeatedly stolen by the Anarchists. They applied to the Ministry for double the quantity of ammunition that they needed, and stored the surplus in their arsenals, into which all the huge quantity of arms they had seized at the storming of the barracks or captured at the front also went. They even had guns of all calibres. During the darkest days, when Saravia was still War Minister, we considered the idea of a surprise attack on the well-armed Anarchist strongholds, and dreamt of being able to send reinforcements to the front armed with munitions from the Anarchist hoard. So tempting was the idea that we actually discussed it seriously with leading members of the Communist Party, who, however, always dissuaded us.

“It would be most impolitic,” they said. “Many Anarcho-Syndicalists have fought and are still fighting well for liberty. Sooner or later all these will come over to us. Then we must kill their leaders to the last man.”

We used to have lunch in the luxurious dining-room in the Minister's suite. The Minister himself lunched alone with his private secretary. Our table

was presided over by the Under-Secretary, and our typists lunched with us. The latter were pretty and charming, true representatives of the women of Madrid, and they were, of course, enthusiastic Republicans. Their presence greatly enlivened and cheered our meal-times, and the Under-Secretary, whom we all venerated, presided paternally over the whole happy family.

At dinner we were generally joined by the Chief of the General Staff and by General Asensio, who took advantage of the opportunity of exchanging impressions about the events of the day. We always waited for General Asensio, who spent all day at the front directing operations and returned shortly before dinner-time to work with his staff, the staff of the Army of the Centre. I always tried to sit apart from Asensio and Estrada, in order to hear as little as possible about what was happening on the Tagus front. For alas! I had no illusions that anything good could come from that quarter.

One night, when Estrada did not join us, Señor Alvarez del Vayo, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, dined at our table. He was very busy on a measure copied from the Russian Civil War, the creation of political commissars among the troops. He was most enthusiastic about this.

Nothing is so Hegelian as war. It is in a constant state of evolution. But military experts, lacking sufficient imagination to discover the reality of their own war, apply to every war the experience of the one before. That always happens to every general staff, and it also happened to the civilians who meddled in military matters on this occasion. The model for our war was obviously the war between the Whites and the Reds in Russia. Undoubtedly there existed certain features common to both, but on the whole they were very different. In our war the Whites had powerful tanks and first-class war 'planes which

dropped hundreds of tons of bombs on us, and there was no *raison d'être* for armoured trains, cavalry, or a war of movement. Political commissars were equally superfluous. What was needed was the creation of a regular army, and for that purpose political commissars could only be a hindrance.

During the conversation at table that night Asensio declared himself a partisan of attack, a partisan of the war of movement, the sort of war he was just putting into practice. I ventured to point out the desirability of prudence, and suggested that it might be well to forget the experience of Peguerinos, for the situation was now totally different, and I added that at the General Staff meeting we had all agreed on the need for remaining on the defensive and establishing fortifications. Asensio replied with a coarse gesture.

"Yes," he said, "and I suppose I ought to give each one of my men an umbrella, too!"

I remained silent and did not hide my resentment at this scarcely courteous repartee.

The others continued their talk. Asensio described how that afternoon he had ordered the execution of several battalion commanders—workers who had risen to the command of militia-units—because their men had found the strain of being bombed by German planes too much for them and had refused to obey his orders to attack.

Asensio had reached the rank of general very young, and his reputation, honourably gained in the Sierra, was at its height. He was Caballero's favourite, which enabled him to take liberties with the instructions of the General Staff and to surround himself with a staff of his own, composed of his own friends, without even waiting for the assent of Tintero's control department. Later on these people all took the first opportunity of going over to the enemy.

After dinner, obviously wishing to placate me, he

asked me to join him over a few glasses of Manzanilla, but I had no need to invent an excuse, because the Under-Secretary told him he needed me for work.

I used to call Asensio 'the man of iron,' because for twenty years he had never gone to bed before dawn and never slept for more than three or four hours a day. After dining with us he used to go to a café to drink with friends and women. At half-past four he would return to the front by car and resume charge of the operations. He did this day after day.

Never in any war has there been so much waste as that committed by the militiamen of the Republic. They wasted everything—food, war material, transport vehicles—and lives. Before we had thirty thousand men on the strength, our commissariat supplied two hundred and fifty thousand rations a day. During the day-time, when it was hot, the men simply threw away their blankets, and at night, when it grew cold again, they asked for more.

Once, when Asensio was still at the Alto de Leon, Menendez asked him how many men he really had.

"I should say that my actual strength in the firing-line is about five thousand," he replied. "But I have about ten thousand on the pay-roll, drawing ten pesetas a day. And don't forget to remind the Commissariat that I must have fifty thousand rations every morning. That's what we consume."

"But who on earth eats the fifty thousand rations?"

"How do I know? The committees, the Popular Front organisations, the people of all the villages near the firing-line; they all live on the army."

Madrid and the rest of Spain were beginning to run short of all sorts of necessities. Whatever there was was commandeered by the innumerable supply committees which had chaotically sprung up. Trade had

ceased to function. I took every opportunity of protesting, in speech and writing, but no one took any notice. Cerdón, for example, or the Under-Secretary, always answered in the same way.

"Don't be such a bore!" Cerdón would say. "Haven't we enough problems on our hands already? That's the business of the Ministry of Commerce. Don't bother us!"

"But who is there at the Ministry of Commerce who knows anything about supplies in war-time? The few people there who remained loyal to the Republic may know something about customs and excise. But what do they know about the decisive rôle of supplies in war? 'They' will take us all alive, and it will serve us right, because we are a lot of incompetent fools. Where are the mountains of food for the army to come from? Do you expect them to fall from the skies? And what will the rest of the country live on if everything is stupidly commandeered?"

I managed to secure an interview with the Under-Secretary of State in the Prime Minister's Department, Señor Llopi, who had great influence with Caballero, and I gave him a long report on the subject. I succeeded in rousing his interest, and did my best to convince him of the absolute necessity of forming two new departments, one devoted to the economic conduct of the war and the other to the mobilisation of industry. My reasons were so clear and convincing, and he seemed so sympathetic, that I believed I had won a collaborator and that ultimately this whole aspect of the war would be rationalised.

I knew what I was up against, and left so many copies of my report with him that I am convinced that at least some of them must survive at the Ministry to this day. I did not omit to mention the most fundamental and obvious considerations, considerations that nobody could fail to understand. Nor did I

omit to mention that we ought to act while we still had command of the sea, and exchange a considerable part of our gold for raw materials. I pointed out that as soon as the battle-cruisers *Baleares* and *Canarias* and the cruiser *España* were able to sail from the shipyards of El Ferrol our command of the sea would be lost and we might easily be blockaded. In conclusion I stated that to win the war we needed an army, a disciplined army, and that an army needed supplies, and that the civil population needed supplies, too. But this presupposed the mobilisation of industry, and as the industrial zone of the Republic was Catalonia, an indispensable postulate for the winning of the war was the enlistment of Catalonia in the service of the Republic.

In response to an order for cloth for uniforms for the militia we had received a telegram from some irresponsible factory committee in Catalonia stating that they would deliver the goods on receipt of payment in gold. This telegram was sufficient to revive the eternal bickering between the Central Government and Catalonia, which was mostly based upon misunderstandings. The traditional tendency of attempting to become independent of Catalonia immediately reasserted itself, and it became our watchword to satisfy the army's requirements as far as possible by means of the industries of the region of Valencia, though they were smaller and less efficient.

Everyone who came to the Ministry in connection with any problem connected with the manufacture of war material had to see Cordón, who had dealt with such matters since the beginning of the war. But one day he started informing them that they should apply to the Ministry of Industry, which, he said, had taken over all such matters. Later they returned, complaining that at the Ministry in question they had been told that nothing was known about the matter. "But I assure you that it is the Ministry of Industry

which is responsible for all such matters," Cordon would reply. "We can't deal with everything here. Besides, that is the arrangement that was made. Go back to the Ministry of Industry, comrade, and they will supply you with the raw materials you want for the manufacture of hand-grenades."

"Very well!" the other would reply. "Remember what I'm telling you. I shall not go back to the Ministry of Industry. I shall commandeer the raw materials I need. What have I got comrades with good rifles for? I'll turn out my hand-grenades, you'll see! *Salud!*"

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

General Miaja

A GROUP of trade unionists from the region of Valencia came to Madrid with an offer to turn out shells for our 105 mm. and 155 mm. guns, of which there was a great shortage, and they were received by the President.

As a result, I was ordered to leave for Valencia the same night, in the company of two experts, to draw up contracts with the unions and see that production was put in hand.

During the afternoon I left the Ministry to go home to pack. The streets of Madrid, which I had not seen for many weeks, gave me a delightful sense of freedom.

I knew that twenty theatres and forty cinemas were still open in Madrid, and the courage and enthusiasm of the people were familiar to me already. At the very beginning of the war General Mola had boasted on the wireless that he would take his coffee in Madrid next day. The answer of the people in Madrid had been to keep a table at the Café Molinero perpetually reserved for him, with a cup of coffee ready and waiting for his arrival.

I found myself with two hours to spare before it was time to go to the station. I spent them strolling about Madrid, revisiting all my favourite haunts. I gazed at the cafés and the shop-windows, as fascinated as if I had been a newly arrived provincial, and

admired the women of Madrid, who are the prettiest and most charming in the world.

My first impression of Valencia was that here the war was very remote. Life seemed normal, the shops were full of goods, the restaurants served copious meals, the cafés were full of people reading the papers and discussing the latest news. But many individuals were walking about in grotesque uniforms, with absurd inscriptions such as 'Long live the FAI¹ and the revolution,' or 'Long live Libertarian Communism' on their red-and-black caps and neckerchiefs. Many of them had rifles of which we were in such desperate need in Madrid. All cars and lorries had been requisitioned and painted with similar inscriptions. As usual, the best cars were in the hands of the FAI.

Republicanism in Valencia is of old standing, and the love of political liberty is deeply rooted. The fertile soil of the province permits of a standard of living far higher than that of Castile, and Valencia has always been in the vanguard of Spanish Republicanism.

The Valencian's love of Valencia differs from the Castilian's love of Castile. The prodigal, luxuriant fertility of his soil holds him in its grip. The result is that his ideal is to own a strip of land and to devote his life to cultivating it. The Castilian's *Wanderlust* is unknown to him. A Valencian leaves his *huerta*² only for important reasons, and then with a sense of guilt. But when a Castilian leaves home, he rejoices at leaving poverty and misery behind him, and he is the envy of all his neighbours.

That is why Valencia is more patriotic than Castile. Her relations with Castile are very different from those between the latter and Catalonia.

In July 1936, the officers revolted in Valencia as

¹ *Federacion Anarquista Iberica*, the central Anarchist organisation of the peninsula.

² 'The garden,' i.e. the region round Valencia.

elsewhere, but they locked themselves in their barracks without daring to attack the people. The latter, armed only with sporting guns, besieged the barracks until the soldiers finally deserted their officers and fraternised with them.

The Madrid Government appointed a Defence Junta under Don Diego Martinez Barrios, the President of the Cortes, but this was dissolved after the surrender of the barracks and the suppression of the rebellion at Albacete, between Madrid and Valencia, when communications between Madrid and Valencia were restored.

But when the barracks surrendered, they were seized by Anarchists, who appropriated all the arms they contained and thus became masters of the whole region. As soon as Barrios returned to Madrid after fulfilling his mission, the Defence Junta was revived by a number of unknown and irresponsible individuals, this in spite of the fact that the Junta had been legally dissolved by the Government. These self-appointed adventurers, in order to maintain their position, sought the support of the Anarchists, who were masters of the streets of Valencia and of the rich villages of the province, and promptly started a campaign of murder and pillage, appropriating everything they could lay their hands on.

Neither Communism nor Socialism had strong roots in Valencia. The workers, though as Republican as the rest of the population, were all Syndicalists. They believed in industrial rather than in political action. After the outbreak of the civil war the domination of the Anarchists over the trade unions of Valencia was absolute and complete.

It was a great misfortune for the Republic that this wealthy region fell into the hands of the Anarchists. The sublime and romantic doctrine of Anarchism is so absurd that any attempt to put it into practice is bound to end in every conceivable kind of political

crime. No sooner was the Republic born than the Anarchists started aiming at its destruction. They hated it because, not being a fairy-godmother, it was unable to wave a magic wand and solve every single problem. Now that we have a Republic, they said to themselves, let us make our revolution! By burning down monasteries and churches, by fomenting endless strikes and assassinations, they did more harm to the Republic, and consequently to themselves, than all the reactionaries combined. At election times their posters were always the same. 'Don't vote!' they invariably proclaimed. 'Casting a vote means helping to elect your own executioners!' The Carlists were justified in basing their hopes on these people's extravagant folly.

After the October revolution, the Anarchists, like all the other parties of the Left, were persecuted by the CEDA Government and therefore took part in the meeting at the Campo de Comillas with the object of overthrowing the reactionaries. On that occasion Azaña addressed the following words to Anarchists of all sorts. "If you continue to act in this fashion," he said, "we cannot help it, but you know exactly what will happen. We shall be governed by the CEDA, in other words, by Hitler and Mussolini."

My hostility to the disastrous policy of the Anarchists turned into hatred and loathing when it became known that the Fascists used Anarchist *pistoleros* for their assassinations.

One of my travelling companions was an artillery captain, an intelligent young man who had made himself a specialist in the manufacture of armaments, and had spent a number of years in the ordnance factory at Trubia. The other was a foreman in the same factory.

After finding rooms in an hotel, we went out, and the first person I met was a former friend of mine from Madrid.

I knew him to be a wild reactionary, associated with the Falange. During the first days of the rising I had feared greatly for his safety. His wife had telephoned me at the Ministry, imploring me to do something to save him from death at the hands of the militiamen. I had no choice but to tell her, as I had told so many others, that there was nothing whatever that I could do. "I always believed in your friendship and now I need it you leave me in the lurch," the poor woman exclaimed. "If I am widowed and my children orphaned, I shall know whom to thank!"

As I was very much afraid he might have been killed, and as he was a man for whom I had a good deal of personal respect, I was greatly relieved to meet him. But I was astonished to see him wearing a Red Cross armlet bearing the three letters, 'FAI.'

He explained that he had escaped from Madrid and had taken refuge in a village near Valencia with the family of a former housemaid. Thanks to her brother, he had joined the FAI, who had given him an antedated membership card. He had studied medicine, but, being a man of means, he had never practised, and he had become medical officer to the FAI, with whom he was popular and very happy.

"They are excellent people," he said, "and I like them very much, and not only because they saved my life."

"Have you friends among the FAI?" the captain asked me when I rejoined him.

"Yes," I told him, "I have friends everywhere."

We needed a car to tour the industrial centres of Valencia, and went to the headquarters of General Miaja, who we hoped would be able to provide us with one. But the General was not available, and his secretary told us that he could not possibly provide

us with a car, for the simple reason that he had none to provide.

"You must apply to Lieutenant Benedicto at the Defence Junta," he said. "Our jurisdiction only extends to the furniture of this building."

"Who is Lieutenant Benedicto?" I asked my companion.

"I don't know," he replied. "All I know is that before we left Madrid an artillery lieutenant told me that the man who ruled the roost in Valencia was a Lieutenant Benedicto. Let us go and see him and ask him for a car, because we should waste an enormous amount of time without one."

We went to the Defence Junta, where, after being asked repeatedly for our credentials, we were eventually shown into the office of Lieutenant Benedicto, chief of the Junta's defence department. Among the staff was a captain from Avila, who told me he was very tired because he had been deputising for two whole days for Lieutenant Benedicto, who had been to Barcelona with a committee of Valencian separatists to negotiate the production and purchase of war material.

He very graciously gave us safe-conducts which, he said, would enable us to circulate freely throughout Valencia. "Those are the first things you'll need," he said.

I replied that I did not think they would be necessary, especially for me, as in addition to a passport signed by Largo Caballero, I had a safe-conduct from the Madrid militia, with a photograph, signed and stamped by all the political parties.

"You're greatly mistaken," he said. "Those papers are quite useless here. The only authority recognised here is that of Lieutenant Benedicto."

"All right, but what about a car? We have no time to lose."

"You will have to apply to Lieutenant Benedicto."

I'll introduce you to him later, when he comes in. He's resting now after his journey. Come back in two hours' time."

"No, I shall wait for him, because we must have a car, and I shan't go away until I've got one. In the meantime I shall ring up the unions and make appointments with them."

Lieutenant Benedicto arrived less than an hour later, and, thanks to the intervention of the captain from my native town, he condescended to receive me. I explained who I was and told him the object of my visit. I said that all I wanted was a car, because I had to cover a good deal of ground and return to Madrid as quickly as possible.

"But do you people in Madrid imagine that Valencia is one of your colonies?" he replied. "Do you really believe that all you have to do is to come here, whereupon all our industries will immediately put themselves at your entire disposal? You are always wanting things from Valencia, and you never give anything in return. Our Iron Column here cannot take Teruel because you selfishly keep all the munitions for yourself. But we produce our own munitions and everything else we need ourselves, without asking you for anything. Go back to Madrid and tell Caballero to put that in his pipe and smoke it!"

I saw that it would be useless to attempt to argue with this young man (he had acquired officer's rank by retiring in accordance with Azaña's reforms), not so much because he was unintelligent as because he was hopelessly perverse and irresponsible. I therefore made no attempt to convince him of the criminal folly of his attitude. As all I wanted was a car, and to be able to get on with my job without being hampered, I got round him by guile.

"Listen," I said. "We in Madrid are suffering from a terrible shortage of munitions. So acute is it,

and so terrific is the pressure on our fronts, that we simply have no time to think of your needs. Besides, we are defending not only Madrid, but a great deal more besides, and among other things Valencia. If we are beaten, you won't last long. You know that as well as I do. In spite of that, we have already discussed sending you the only kind of help that we can send you, that is to say, the money you need to solve your problems."

Before I left him he had promised that a car would call for me at my hotel that afternoon.

We spent the whole afternoon at the hotel door, waiting for it, but it never turned up. In the end we grew tired of waiting and telephoned Benedicto's office. They apologised, and promised a car for the following morning without fail. But rather than rely on it I went to the local headquarters of the Communist Party and talked to the regional secretary. He told me that his party had only commandeered the indispensable minimum of cars, but that, in view of the importance of my mission, he would lend me the car he used himself.

I thanked him, and asked him the following question :

"What would happen if by a stroke of the pen Caballero abolished the Defence Junta and ordered Lieutenant Benedicto to proceed to the Sierra to take command of one of the batteries which are so terribly short of artillerymen ?"

"Nothing," he replied, "nothing whatever. The whole region would heave a sigh of relief, and the Madrid Government would acquire so much authority in the province that we could give it much more help than we do now. Talk to the people here, and you'll see for yourself. Even the Syndicalists would like to see the authority of the Madrid Government extended to Valencia, in order the better to fight Fascism. Everybody is indignant to see the civil governor's

office, as well as the divisional command and all the other key-spots in the town, protected with sand-bags, as if they were fortresses. They were barricaded for fear of an attack by the FAI. The consequences are deplorable. For the people of Valencia the 'fifth column' are not the Fascists, but the FAI. Their dearest wish is to be rid of them."

The driver whom the Communist Party gave me was the bull-fighter Enrique Torres, whom I had so often admired in the ring. It was a piece of great good fortune to be his passenger, for he was the idol of the province. Everybody knew him, and the village guards, instead of stopping us, greeted him with pride and affection and let us pass. As he knew all the roads and had a great many friends, he was very useful to us.

In all the factories we visited the workers were Syndicalists, yet they received us enthusiastically, and their loyalty to the cause was very plain. This confirmed my conviction that they would be prepared, if occasion arose, to fight the Anarchists in defence of the common good, and that what they wanted above all was to participate effectively in the struggle against Fascism.

Whether it was because they were intelligent workmen or because enthusiasm nearly always works miracles, with the help of my two experts they rapidly turned out entirely satisfactory samples of what was wanted. The captain was astonished and delighted. He spent two days at the factory, and at the end of that time it was turning out shells fulfilling every technical requirement, just as if the workers had had years of experience.

I stayed in Valencia for several days, and discovered that not only shells, but guns, trench-mortars, and light tanks could be produced there.

But how was this industrial mobilisation to be co-ordinated? That was my problem, and it was a

very complex one. The factory workers told me their wants, which to a certain degree I should be able to satisfy from Madrid, even without a centralised organisation to co-ordinate production. But the workers told me that without discipline our efforts would be wasted, for there was always the risk of the FAI confiscating all that they turned out. They also said that all authority in Valencia ought to be centred in General Miaja, and that, since they were engaged in a war, they wanted to take orders from soldiers only.

All the evidence went to show that in the long run our capacity to make war depended on the rich resources of the province of Valencia. I felt it so absolutely vital that Madrid should appreciate this that I was determined to gather the fullest possible evidence to lay before Largo Caballero, in order that the Government might take the appropriate steps for the administration of this rich reservoir of the sinews of war. With this purpose in view I approached the leaders of all the political parties as well as other responsible personalities. They all said the same thing. None of them could understand why the Government delayed suppressing the irresponsible elements who were ransacking everything. If power were put into the hands of General Miaja, the whole population of Valencia would follow him.

I shall remember for a long time my interview with the mayor of Valencia. Seeing that I was well informed, and concluding from my mission that the report I was about to make to Madrid would lead to definite results, his mood of discouragement was transformed to hope. He genuinely believed that with my return the political problems of Valencia would be solved, and that henceforward Valencia would be in a position to give far more effective aid.

I had avoided seeking an interview with General Miaja, because I had feared that it would be painful.

I did not know him, and had only heard excellent reports of him. But I had had many telephone conversations with him. Eventually one morning I went to his office, and was immediately won by the pleasantness of his reception and his attractive personality.

I started by explaining that while Saravia had been War Minister we had been completely absorbed by events on the Madrid fronts, to the exclusion of all else, and that was why, whenever he had telephoned and asked for the Minister, it had always been I who had dealt with him. But I assured him that, now that the new General Staff was functioning, the Under-Secretariat desired to pay closer attention to problems not immediately concerned with the front-line and that we looked forward to maintaining closer contact with him in the future.

General Miaja, too, was convinced of the vital importance of Valencia for Madrid. He, too, recognised the importance of bringing the province under proper administrative control. That, in fact, was his constant preoccupation. He was greatly distressed at the tragedy of the *huerta*, where the peasants, terrified by the wholesale pillaging carried out by the Anarchists and the mania for collectivisation, were refraining from sowing.

"If it is not stopped," he said, "the Anarchists will succeed in the apparently impossible task of ruining this fertile region."

Our conversation was interrupted by a telephone message from Lieutenant Benedicto, who ordered the General to come to his office. Miaja asked me to wait till he returned. He returned not long afterwards, seething with indignation.

"Calm yourself, General," I said. "Tell me what has happened. I appeal to you to tell me what has happened."

"Oh, it's nothing, Martín. But I can stand it no

longer. Only a saint or a lunatic could stand it, and I am neither. Tell the President I have reached the limit of my patience. Let him appoint me to the command of a battalion, or anything, but I must get away from here. After all, I am a general. Why do they keep me eating my heart out here? My authority ends here at the office door. I can stand it no longer. It is incompatible with my dignity as a general, a Republican, and a man!"

"But tell me what has happened, General."

"Only that I have just been turned out of Lieutenant Benédicto's office after being upbraided like a raw recruit. Tell Caballero that it's a disgrace for me to be treated like this. I've got to the point of wanting to shoot that lieutenant. This can't go on!"

"Calm yourself, General, it won't be allowed to go on," I replied. "I am confident that my journey will achieve its object, and that when I get back to Madrid everything will be arranged."

"Martín," the General went on, "I am over fifty, and have reached the age of serenity. What drives me mad is not the constant humiliations I suffer at the hands of this lieutenant. It's the criminal damage that is done to the cause. Imagine what help we could give the gallant militiamen of Madrid if I could enforce discipline here with the help of the Government!"

I returned to Madrid and made a lengthy report to Caballero on what I had seen. A few days later a Socialist deputy was appointed civil governor of Valencia. More sandbags were sent to the governor's office to protect it against the Anarchists, and from the midst of this fortress the governor exercised his functions. The Anarchists continued to behave as if in conquered territory, and Lieutenant Benédicto continued protesting that Madrid received supplies from Valencia, but sent no money in return. General Miaja was recalled and sent on leave to Alicante. In

accordance with my instructions I drew up a whole series of magnificent contracts, containing many technical and legal conditions, to be signed by the Government on the one hand and the factory committees on the other.

Meanwhile Fascist 'planes were flying with impunity over Madrid, but they had not yet started dropping bombs.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Russian Help

AFTER my return from Valencia work at the Ministry was so intense that it left me no time to think of anything else. It left me no time even to feel irritated. When I look back on it now I feel astonished that I did not protest more violently at the incomprehension and neglect with which my reports from Valencia were treated. I think the real reason for my patience was the kind of freemasonry which linked all the officers in the Republican camp. I felt deeply attached to all my colleagues, especially Córdón and Don Rodrigo Gil, and I am certain they reciprocated my feelings. We were a real band of brothers.

Nevertheless I complained that no action was being taken to mobilise industry in the service of the Republic, and took advantage of moments when prominent political leaders were in the office to voice my protests. I sometimes declared that I blushed to have to repeat such elementary truths as that it was our duty, after gaining control of the barracks, to gain control of the factories, which were situated in Valencia and Catalonia, and that hence our most urgent task was to extend the authority of the Government to those regions.

I was told that nothing could be done about it ; that I knew nothing of the struggles between the parties ; that I did not know the FAI ; that only time

would bring them round to reason ; that they would see the need for disciplined co-operation in the end ; that meanwhile it was necessary to wait ; that in any case the war would be over long before they did see it ; and that it was inopportune to think of manufacturing war material ; and that we must remain content with buying it.

I had no direct knowledge of the way in which war material was bought. But one night a member of some commission which had just returned from abroad discussed the question of purchases with the Under-Secretary in my presence. The Under-Secretary advised him to buy heavy artillery for choice.

The man was an artilleryman, like Cordon and Don Rodrigo Gil.

Within the freemasonry of the Republican army, no jealousy existed between officers belonging to different arms. We all wore mufti and behaved as equals. It was indifferent to us whether staff officers were artillerymen or doctors or infantrymen or military chemists. But that night, when these three artillerymen discussed the purchase of war materials in my presence, they were one hundred per cent artillerymen and therefore wanted the biggest guns they could get. In this they were in harmony with the spirit of all Spanish artillerymen. I violently disagreed with them.

They pointed out that before infantry could advance it was necessary to silence the enemy's guns, and for that purpose heavy artillery was required.

"I am not an artilleryman," I replied, "and I don't even know how to handle a gun, but I do know that to put a gun out of action you need a well-aimed round from another gun. A small gun is quite as likely to hit its mark as a big one. Like all true artillerymen, you want to kill sparrows with shrapnel, but a much better way of killing sparrows is with

slings. You don't want heavy artillery to silence enemy guns. It's far too expensive, it's bad business. For every gun put out of action by your artillery, twenty are captured by your advancing infantry. Moreover, even granted you destroy the enemy artillery, the enemy use the shell-holes as machine-gun emplacements from which to mow down your advancing infantry."

"Yes, but heavy guns destroy the enemy's morale."

"You artillerymen love noise. But it's very expensive noise. Every shell that's fired costs a lot of money and causes a lot of work. Moreover, we know that the militiamen have learned to treat shelling by heavy guns as a joke. After being exposed to unrestricted bombing and machine-gunning from the air for day after day, a heavy artillery bombardment is a joke."

"We need heavy guns for long-range bombardment."

"Long-range bombardment causes just as many casualties to your own troops as it does to the enemy."

"How can we launch an offensive without big guns? Don't you know that big guns are needed for the destruction of fortified positions?"

"But who is thinking of an offensive? What world are you living in? It will be a miracle if we succeed in defending ourselves successfully. I agree that we have been unable to reduce the Alcazar at Toledo for want of a few big guns. But before your big guns arrive, the Alcazar will either have surrendered or we shall have lost Toledo. We have not often been faced with the reduction of an enemy fortress, and perhaps it may never happen again."

"I am horrified," I continued, "at the misinterpretation of the military position which your talk reveals. Let me remind you that not a single day has passed since the war began when we had sufficient

rifle ammunition for our infantrymen even, and no solution to the problem is yet in sight. We are short of 7 mm. ammunition, and yet you want us to have heavy artillery! And what about keeping heavy artillery supplied with ammunition? Is that an easy task? And don't forget that after firing a few hundred rounds big guns are unserviceable. Let us drop all thought of big guns, and buy rifles and machine-guns, particularly heavy machine-guns; and machinery and raw material for turning out munitions, as well as light tanks and trench-mortars, which we can produce ourselves."

This discussion once more made me feel how great was the gap caused by the dropping of Menendez. If he had still been Under-Secretary of State for War, how invaluable he would have been!

I had often discussed the munitions problem with him during the hectic early days.

"We must take advantage," he used to say, "of the enormous advantage enjoyed by the defence. Militarily we are much inferior to the enemy. But the defence is so much stronger than the attack that we shall be able to force the Fascists to mark time. Mark my words, Martín. As soon as we have ammunition and machine-guns, they won't be able to advance an inch. You need not be afraid of tanks and motorised units. As soon as we have heavy machine-guns and some field artillery they will be checked. They will exhaust their strength battering their heads against a brick wall. And they will tire before we shall. Only the most appalling mismanagement on our part would enable them to win!"

What a difference between Menendez and these artillerymen! Why was Menendez such a realist? Why was his vision so concrete? Not, I am convinced, because he had flashes of brilliant inspiration. These artillerymen did not go astray merely because they were less intelligent than he. But the fact was that

Menendez simply knew his job. He had worked hard at Toledo and at the Military High School, but his insight was primarily due to his own independent thinking, and his careful reading of what had been written on the art of war in countries beyond the Pyrenees.

Spain is said to be the country of improvisation. Spaniards always believe that in case of need something will turn up. This misplaced confidence has been the cause of many disasters.

During the war I came into contact with some of the most gifted men in Spain. I was forced to realise that they were of very little use, because they knew nothing of the problems of war. They had never thought about them, and had no military education. Therefore their ideas and actions generally achieved the exact opposite of their purpose. For it is a profound truth that there is no such thing as improvisation.

The Spanish faith in improvisation reached its climax during the period when Menendez was Under-Secretary for War. More than once I heard people exclaiming in admiration :

“Menendez never hesitates for a moment, he always knows exactly what to do. He is a genius at improvisation.”

“Certainly not,” I used to reply. “What you call improvisation is the result of life-long study and reflection. It is the very reverse of improvisation. Improvisation, indeed !”

But to return to the question of heavy artillery, needless to say the artillerymen had their way. The views of a non-artilleryman did not deserve to be taken seriously.

Not long afterwards a big foreign cargo-boat loaded with heavy guns and ammunition, which cost us many millions of pesetas, landed at Cadiz or Ceuta, I don't remember which, but in any case at a rebel port, not

because it was captured by the rebels, but because the captain accepted an enormous bribe.

The transport problem still seriously hampered our military operations. Thousands of cars and lorries had been commandeered, but the command never had sufficient for all the army's requirements. The constant shortage was the despair of the supplies section of the General Staff, for, though they were not responsible for it, they got all the blame. Urgent troop movements were several times held up because no transport was available. Convoys of food and munitions used to arrive late. There were protests, sometimes from the militiamen themselves. Occasionally they assumed violent forms.

Prominent trade union leaders passed through our office on their way to see the Prime Minister, and I thought that these were the moments to tackle them on the question. The leaders of the various working-class parties used to pass through our office too, and stop and talk to the Under-Secretary and Cerdón. But I did not press the matter, because I was convinced that experience would teach them the necessity of accepting my project to militarise the transport services. But when I thought the time was ripe I asked whether two months' experience had not been sufficient to convince everybody of the absurdity of leaving motor transport in the hands of the unions and whether the time had not come for me to revive my former plan.

"No, Martín," Cerdón replied. "You won't face the facts. Nothing whatever can be done without the consent of the political parties. There is a transport union which has the sole responsibility, and we can't interfere."

I replied that this was a disgraceful and criminal

piece of folly, and that an end ought to be put to it immediately.

"Martín," Cerdón said, "I must tell you, in all friendship, that you must be more discreet. Frankness always rouses hostility, and in revolutions frankness is dangerous and is often paid for dearly. It is the political parties who are defending the Republic, and we are subordinate to the political parties. Drop the idea that the parties are subordinate to us. Moreover, let me remind you that we are living in strange times, when people are killed for nothing at all. I seriously advise you to join the Communist Party. It needs you, and you need it. Anybody who is not a member of a party is liable to be shot."

"The Republic," I replied, "is defended by all Spaniards, whether they belong to a political party or not, who do not wish their country, which is backward enough as it is, to return to the times of Philip II. I shall not join the Communist Party, for the simple reason that there's not a grain of Communism in me."

The fact that motor transport was left in the hands of the unions depressed me greatly ; it even somewhat discouraged me. It was, therefore, a relief one day when the Minister sent me on a mission.

"A Russian ship is coming into Alicante to-night," he said. "Take a car and go there at once and welcome it in my name. Your mission is to see that the people at Alicante don't keep the cargo for themselves. It consists of foodstuffs, and I hear they have designs on it. Your mission is to forestall them."

While waiting for the car, I called on my colleagues of the operations section and dined in their office with a cavalry major, a pupil of the Military High School and

a great friend of mine. He had attended the first meeting of the General Staff.

We exchanged ideas about the military situation, and on leaving me he said :

“ That night we were over-realistic. We made the mistake of under-estimating the importance of enthusiasm in war. It is enthusiasm which is holding up the enemy's march on Madrid. Enthusiasm is working miracles, or rather enthusiasm plus infantry, for that is all we have. As soon as we get the machine-guns and the few anti-tank guns we are expecting the watchword *no pasarán*¹ will become a reality. And shall I tell you something else ? ”

“ What ? ”

“ It's something that you, too, may have forgotten. Infantry is still the queen of battles.”

I was unable to leave Madrid till midnight, and then we drove very slowly, because the driver of my eight-cylinder Ford (he was a Socialist) had not slept the night before and was very tired. At dawn we were still sixty miles from Alicante, and he declared he could drive no longer and asked me to take the wheel, which I did. The man fell asleep at once.

After driving for a few miles, I took a corner and suddenly came upon two blood-bespattered corpses lying in the middle of the roadway. I swerved so violently in order to avoid them that the car ran off the road and nearly overturned. I was so shocked that I asked the driver to take the wheel again. The swerve had awakened him, and as he had not seen the two corpses, he believed the incident was due to my inexperienced driving. Though I had been shut up in the four walls of the Ministry for weeks, I knew only

¹ ‘ They shall not pass.’

too well what a misfortune it was that the Government was unable to prevent murders and acts of private vengeance, but this brutal and unexpected reminder upset me greatly.

When we reached Alicante the Russian ship had not yet entered the harbour. I took advantage of the opportunity to call upon the governor and the president of the Provincial Supplies Commission.

Caballero's fears that Alicante would try to keep the cargo for itself turned out to be unfounded. What had happened was this. The Alicante Commission had been, and still was, sending large amounts of foodstuffs to Madrid, where, however, it had never occurred to anybody to arrange for payment. The consequence was that Alicante was faced with ruin, and the Commission had informed Madrid that it was proposed to retain part of the condensed milk from the Russian boat for the Alicante hospitals and children's homes, which were entirely devoid of it.

Next day the *Neva*, from Odessa, drew into the harbour with two thousand tons of provisions, raised by subscription among the Russian people. Reactionary newspapers all over the world announced the landing at Alicante of a Russian ship laden to the brim with armaments. The cargo of the *Neva* consisted of butter, milk, flour, sugar, and salted cod.

I went to the railway station to see about trains for transporting the shipment to Madrid. But not a single truck was on the spot. I talked to the railway committee, and they told me to go back to the harbour and tell them to start unloading. They would 'improvise' some trucks in the meantime. They did not improvise them, but assembled all the trucks from all the neighbouring stations, and within forty-eight hours we were able to dispatch the food-trains to Madrid.

The unloading and reloading was done with record speed. A system of shifts and relays was organised so

that the work went on smoothly and uninterruptedly and, in accordance with the wishes of the dock-labourers, it was so arranged that every single one of them had an opportunity of taking part. These Alicante labourers were all Syndicalists, but their enthusiasm and discipline were positively stirring. They are magnificent men.

One of those who rendered signal services to the Republic throughout the war was the harbour-master. I remarked to him what excellent Republicans these workers were.

"The poor devils are dying of starvation," he said. "Before the rising they were working two days a week. Now, with the port completely paralysed, they are reduced to the greatest destitution. You must see that the Ministry pays them for this work. It is only their right. They do not ask for it ; they are working voluntarily ; and you know that they are working in turns, to enable everyone of them to share in the honour of unloading a Russian boat."

We made a collection among the Republicans present, and with its proceeds bought a few bottles of Cognac to share round among the workers, to compensate them for their hard work. They insisted on our sharing with them, so we sat down and joined them.

"You can talk to the captain of the boat in French, or whatever it is," one old worker said to the harbour-master and me, "so please tell him that we Spanish workers could almost weep with gratitude to our Russian brothers, but tell him that we don't want them to send us food. It doesn't matter if we die of starvation, but we want them to send us arms to fight the Fascists with."

The day after the *Neva* sailed an English cargo-boat came in with twenty thousand rifles, twenty million rounds of ammunition, and some machine-guns. It was unloaded so rapidly that within a few

hours three trains of thirty trucks each were on their way to Madrid, laden with this precious cargo. All the workers of Alicante lined the quayside, all wanting to help in the unloading. When one of those at work dropped out, exhausted, the onlookers would fight for the honour of replacing him.

Part of the cargo consisted of guns, packed in cases with German inscriptions, giving Hamburg as the port of origin. I never found out where they really came from, but I should not be surprised if they were really German.

The captain of the boat was a typical pirate. His cabin was full of contraband. He sold it, and bought Spanish goods with the proceeds. He immediately started pestering me for a 'reward' for having brought his cargo into a Republican port.

I thought it might be politic to comply with his demands, and therefore got into communication with the Ministry, using a telewriter, both for the purpose of keeping the matter secret and preserving a record of the transaction. I asked the Ministry to send me an appropriate sum to satisfy this sea-wolf, and give him an inducement to repeat his journey.

Cordón, who answered me, said that he was in entire agreement, but must first talk the matter over with the Minister. Meanwhile the boat, though unloaded, did not weigh anchor, and the captain followed me about the streets, pestering me for his 'reward.' I pressed the Ministry for a reply, but no reply came, and the captain became more and more importunate.

I did not know what to do for the best, and found the situation extremely embarrassing. I ended by doing a rather foolish thing. I went to see a good Republican of Alicante, a man of means, whom, however, I did not know. I told him the whole story, and begged him to supply me with enough money to get rid of the importunate captain.

"How much do you think we ought to give him?" he asked.

"I have no idea," I said. "Three thousand pesetas, perhaps?" I added, rather sheepishly.

"What! three thousand pesetas! But that's a disgraceful amount to offer a man who brings us arms, which we need more than anything else in the world. We ought to give him far more!"

"I agree, but I don't want to let you down in case the Ministry refuses to pay. It mustn't be a sum greater than I could repay out of my own purse in case of need."

Three thousand pesetas were handed over to the captain by a third person and the ship at last weighed anchor.

The interpreter sent from the Russian Embassy in Madrid for the reception of the *Neva* was a lady known as Señorita Michèle. She was neither very young nor very pretty, but her figure and her blue eyes made her very attractive. We liked each other from the outset, and somehow we always managed to be together. While the *Neva* lay in harbour we were both almost constantly on board, and I lived on caviare and Russian bread and butter. The captain and his officers invariably offered caviare, tea, butter-cakes, and vodka to the many deputations who called on them to offer their thanks to the Russian people, and I always had my share.

The people of Alicante showered gifts on the Russian sailors, and the latter took the opportunity of buying things in the town's shops, which were still well stocked. What fascinated them most was the bootmakers. They all bought several pairs of shoes, for themselves and their wives. Michèle and I took carloads of them to the bootmakers, and when they saw

the display—Spanish shoes are the finest in the world—they were as delighted as children at a Christmas bazaar. When one car-load had bought their shoes, we fetched another, and took them to the boot-makers in their turn, as well as to other shops. Crowds gathered in the streets and gazed at us through the windows. After the *Neva* had been in Alicante for two days the whole town knew me and my ‘Russian lady.’

The *Neva* sailed away, and between its departure and the arrival of the *Kuban* we had a holiday. We spent the mornings on the beach, bathing and sun-bathing, and in the afternoons we drove round the picturesque country-side. Sometimes I would forget my country’s tragedy, only to feel remorse later at having been happy in the midst of it.

We ate *paellas* at the restaurants, and when I asked for the bill, the waiter would frequently reply that it had already been paid.

“By whom?” I would inquire, looking round for some friend who might have been so generous.

“By us, the waiters,” he would explain. “We have as much right as you to have the honour of entertaining this Russian young lady, captain, and we are also delighted to have the opportunity of entertaining you, as the representative of the officers who remained loyal to the Republic.”

“Thank you very much indeed, but in return you must allow me to entertain you, as representatives of the generous Spanish people, to a round of cognacs and some cigars.”

Michèle was greatly touched by these demonstrations of popular feeling.

One afternoon, when we were walking on the beautiful beach at San Juan, I started asking her questions about Russia and about her life. We sat on the beach. She answered my questions, speaking sometimes in Spanish and sometimes in French.

Suddenly she rose to her feet and said :

"Let's walk on. I have a confession to make, a very painful confession, which, I fear, will disappoint you greatly. But I must make it. I hope I shan't completely lose your esteem, though I shall disappoint you terribly."

"And what may that terrible confession be?"

"I'm not a Russian at all! I'm a Czechoslovakian from Prague. My real name is Marianka," she said in a thin little trickle of a voice.

Early next morning we learnt that the *Kuban* had arrived, and a few minutes later we were at the quay.

Unloading had begun without a moment's delay. On my arrival the workers proudly showed me several railway trucks already fully loaded. This boat, like the previous one, carried food, and the unloading proceeded at high speed.

The captain was a young man who made himself popular immediately. He spent his whole time receiving delegations, all of whom brought presents, mostly flowers, and made speeches. He replied briefly in Russian, which was translated by Michèle, and he always ended with "*Viva la republica Española!*" in Spanish. Then followed the inevitable tea, caviare, and vodka.

"This captain is a young man who belongs to the generation of the revolution," Michèle said to me, "and his sympathy for the Spanish Republic is very sincere. But try to prevent all the comrades who come to see him from always saying the same thing. I don't know how many times I've had to translate that the Spanish workers are used to hunger, and that they don't want food, but arms! I've noticed that each time it causes him pain. He would like Russia to send

arms as much as the Spaniards would like to receive them, but what can he do ? ”

Once more we took the Russian sailors in relays to the bootmakers, and once more they were all as delighted as children at a Christmas bazaar.

“ These men seem to me completely different from any I have previously met,” I said to Michèle. “ Please tell me what kind of men they are and what they think.”

“ The simple explanation is that they are happy,” she replied. “ They are the only people in Europe who have no fear of losing all they have, but, on the contrary, are confident that every year things will get a little better. They remember the lives of their fathers, and their own sad childhood, and compare them with the life lying ahead for their own children, and all the opportunities they will have. They know that their sons will be able to develop their physical and mental powers with the help of more books, laboratories and facilities generally than will be at the disposal of the young people of any other country. In Russia the children are better cared for than the children of even the most advanced nations, and the facilities are available for all children without discrimination. This makes happy children, but even happier parents. But the principal reason for their happiness, in my opinion, is the absence of any fear of unemployment. For unemployment does not exist in Russia. The Russians are not perpetually haunted by the fear of losing their jobs, and have no need to worry about the problem of finding jobs for their children. They know that their children will live in better conditions than theirs, and will have greater advantages than they in every respect. So it is not surprising that they feel happy.”

“ Those are certainly reasons for feeling happy,” I said. “ But I am inclined to think that the chief reason for their happiness is the complete absence of

critical sense, of the very existence of which they have no idea."

"That is true. I don't think, as many people do, that it is due to their 'Asiatic origin.' On the contrary, it is due to twenty years of systematic education combined with a rigid censorship and supremely skilful propaganda, which have spread the conviction that to think independently is worthless and criminal, and that intelligence must only be used for the execution of the Party's will as embodied in Stalin."

"Very well. I can understand that no political criticism in politics is allowed, though that is something that is very repugnant to me. But how can science and the arts flourish without criticism?"

"Yet Russia is so rich in people with creative gifts," Michèle replied with some irony, "that science and the arts make tremendous strides. True, the number of victims, of highly talented people who need liberty and perish in the clash with the iron forces of the State, is very great."

"Very well then, you will see the sense of what I have so often said, namely, that there is no room for Communism in Spain, especially for Communism of the Russian variety."

"Why?"

"Because we Spaniards criticise everything all the time. We have a positive mania for criticising, and nothing will ever stop us. Also, we are incurably insubordinate."

I shall never forget the *Kuban's* last night at Alicante.

The unloading had been finished, and we dined in the saloon, under a huge portrait of Stalin. While we were at coffee, the ship's wireless was tuned in to

Moscow, and all the sailors crowded round to listen to the news.

We gathered from the faces of our Russian hosts that the news was very unusual. As soon as it was over they started giving vent to a most extraordinary outburst of enthusiasm. They started embracing one another, jumping for joy and dancing round the room. They started embracing us Spaniards, and forced us to dance, too. They were so excited that they did not tell us what it was all about. Even Michèle was so carried away that she did not stop to translate for us. To satisfy our curiosity we were obliged to drag her away.

"Oh, forgive me, we were so excited that we completely forgot you don't understand Russian," she said. "Moscow has just announced that Russia has resumed her liberty of action, in view of the mockery the Fascist States have made of the Non-Intervention Pact by sending all sorts of war material to the rebels. Moscow said she has honestly abided by the Pact, but in view of the shameless German and Italian intervention she refuses to allow the Spanish Republic to perish, to the shame of the civilised world. Russia has resumed her liberty of action! She will send arms to the Republic!"

The frenzy reached its height when a delegation arrived with the governor at its head, accompanied by a splendid military band. The dancing now extended to the quay, where all Alicante had gathered.

The departure of the *Kuban* had to be delayed because the people of Alicante insisted on prolonging their farewell to the Russian sailors. Everybody wanted to embrace them, and they wanted to embrace everybody, too. They sang, they shouted, they cheered. Eventually the *Kuban* cast off, but the people of Alicante accompanied her right to the end of the jetty.

Towards morning, when I finally had an opportunity of talking to Michèle alone, I told her how

surprised I was that these simple sailors took the Spanish problem so much to heart, and were so happy at their Government's decision to send arms to Spain. I said that I should never have imagined that the Russian people, living under a dictatorship, identified itself so closely with the Soviet State.

"On this occasion," Michèle replied, "it is not the Russian people that has identified itself with its Government, but the Government which has identified itself with the people. Since their own revolution the Russians have found nothing so inspiring as the struggle of the Spanish Republic. Russia follows the ups and downs of the struggle with passionate interest. Even the children talk of nothing but Spain, and have learned its geography inside out. The captain of the boat described the scenes at Odessa when he sailed, and he said he had never seen anything like it. People came from all the neighbouring towns to bid the ship farewell. So great was the public subscription that far more food could actually have been sent. But the amount was restricted, in order to avoid difficulties with other nations.

"And, captain," she added, "it is time you realised the big difference between the help given to the Republic by Russia and that given to the rebels by Germany. I've heard you say several times that the only difference between Russia and Germany is that the one took a right turn and the other a left turn. But the help given to the rebels by Germany was certainly contrary to the wishes of the majority of the German people, while help for the Republic has been granted by the Soviet Government under the pressure of Russian public opinion. Germany sends the rebels arms in order to kill women and children, and try to encircle France, or to practise blackmail in international politics. But the Russian people, one of the most generous and humane peoples in the world, forces its Government to support the victims of aggression."

“ That’s enough Soviet propaganda. I’m convinced already ! ”

I had to stay in Alicante one day longer, because the Under-Secretary informed me by telephone that yet another boat was on the way, and he instructed me to remain until its cargo was unloaded and safely on the way to Madrid. This boat, however, did not arrive.

That afternoon I met General Miaja, who was still on leave at Alicante.

I told him, with reference to the talk we had had at Valencia, that my efforts at Madrid had failed. Our conversation became a series of sad complaints. He asked me several times if I believed the Government would find employment for him.

“ They are bound to,” I replied. “ I’ve seen innumerable blunders, but to decline to make use of the services of one of our few loyal generals would be the height of folly.”

Michèle arrived, and I took leave of the general.

“ Is that a friend of yours ? ” she asked.

“ He’s an unemployed general, named Miaja.”

“ How can you be so imprudent as to talk publicly to an unemployed general ? In a revolution you have to be very careful. To talk to a general in disgrace is the height of folly.”

“ No, he isn’t exactly in disgrace. The fact is that they simply don’t know what to do with him, or what use to make of him. But that’s only temporary, and he’ll soon be on the active list again. Besides, my dear, we are not in Russia. We do not change our behaviour towards people according to the favour or disfavour they happen to be enjoying with the Government ! ”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Journey to Minorca

ON my return to Madrid I learned bad news. Toledo had been captured by the rebels, and only one small workshop for the manufacture of 7 mm. ammunition had been dismantled and removed. The rest of the factory had fallen into the enemy's hands. The fall of the Imperial City, whose name is indissolubly bound up with all the glories of Spanish history, was a grave moral blow. But for me it primarily meant the loss of the munitions factory and the fact that the enemy could now cut all Madrid's railway communications.

I was greatly disappointed to discover that a National Supplies Committee had been formed along parliamentary committee lines. It consisted of one representative of the CNT, one of the UGT, one of the municipality of Madrid, one for each party of the Popular Front, and one for the Union of Bank and Stock Exchange Clerks, together with representatives of the Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, and War. In all there were sixteen members of this committee, the chairman of which was the Under-Secretary of Commerce. Such had been the result of all my pleadings for the creation of a Ministry of Supplies.

I told Señor Llopis, the Prime Minister's Under-Secretary, of my disappointment, and pointed out how grave it was that no more satisfactory solution of such a vital problem had been found.

He replied that he was unaware of what had happened at Cabinet meetings to cause such a decision to be made. In politics, he said, one could not always act as one would like. No doubt it was the result of a compromise reached between the coalition parties.

"It seems to me unpardonable that in matters of such vital importance decisions should be come to on the basis of formulæ acceptable to a lot of politicians," I replied. "An efficient Department is a necessity of war, and in face of that all divergences of opinion should disappear. After all, aren't we at war?"

One of the journalists on the staff of *Claridad*, with whom the Ministry at all times abounded, said :

"The fact that we only have a Supplies Committee instead of a Supplies Ministry, which, I agree, is an absolute necessity, is the fault of the Minister of Finance, Señor Negrin, who is another of those Centre Group Socialists, and a learned professor of physiology at the Central University. But he fancies himself as the master of our Exchequer and gold reserve, and wants to administer it all himself."

I was appointed as the War Ministry's representative on this committee, which had already met four times. The meeting-place was a big room at the Ministry of Commerce, containing a large, oval table exactly similar to that used for Cabinet meetings at the Ministry of War. When I walked in, the meeting was already in progress, with Señor Lamonedá, the Under-Secretary of State for Commerce, in the chair. He, too, was a member of the Centre Group of the Socialist Party. He had a subtle mind, and was a skilled and experienced chairman.

My seat was pointed out to me, and the Socialist deputy Cordero, another Centre Group Socialist and the representative of the Madrid municipality, continued speaking. His speech consisted of a reply to a personal attack upon him made by another Socialist

member of the committee, but one belonging to the Left Wing. He wound up by saying it was our duty to organise supplies and not insult one another.

When this was over the representative of the CNT rose and objected that his organisation, with a membership of a million, only had one representative on the committee, while the Socialist Party had several representatives. The CNT, he said, protested once more against this slight upon it, and against the continual attempts that were made to side-track it. It was therefore withdrawing from the committee as a protest against the discrimination against it shown by the Government.

The CNT delegate was a grocer's assistant, and his speech was involved, repetitive, and long-winded. As soon as he sat down nearly all the others sprang to their feet to answer him, and one by one they did so in well-chosen and eloquent words. Experienced debaters as they were, they had little difficulty in overwhelming the poor man, but being full of the spirit of goodwill and conciliation, they offered him a compromise. The National Committee, they suggested, should remain as it was, but the CNT should have two delegates on each of the provincial committees which the National Committee had powers to create.

The chairman gave the CNT representative the opportunity to reply, but asked him to be brief, as it was desirable to adjourn the meeting to allow the delegates to reach home before the street-lamps were put out.

The CNT delegate's reply was brief. He dropped his high-falutin language and this time spoke naturally, forgetting that he was sitting at an important conference table with a lot of bigwigs.

"You have convinced me, comrades, but the CNT ordered me to protest, and protest I did," he said. "In any case, I'm not the real CNT delegate here,

but only his deputy, but I shall ask him to come along here to-morrow and decide for himself whether to resign or not."

He then brought his speech to an abrupt conclusion.

"Besides," he said, "let us face the facts frankly. There's a nice outlook for us Anarchists whatever happens. If the Fascists win, they'll shoot us all, and if you win, you'll shoot us. So you might just as well settle all these things between yourselves. It doesn't make the slightest difference whether the CNT is represented or not!"

I had come to the end of my patience, and I asked the chairman's permission to speak.

"We shall be delighted to hear the representative of the War Ministry, but if the matter is not an urgent one I shall ask him to be good enough to postpone his speech till to-morrow," the chairman said.

"I am not going to make a speech," I replied. "For one thing I don't know how to make speeches. But I am going to make a violent protest, too. The enemy have taken Toledo, and they will probably cut our railway communications with Valencia. In Madrid we are running short of many prime necessities, as we all know—witness the endless queues outside the shops. It is only with the greatest difficulty that the army is being supplied. It is obvious that we must use every hour at our disposal to rush food trains into Madrid. That is the situation. And what are we doing to remedy this disastrous state of affairs? We make speeches, and even insult one another. We, around this table can stop insulting one another, but what can we do except make speeches? It's not our fault, but the fault of those who imagine that it's possible to solve such problems by gathering sixteen gentlemen round this table every afternoon. If it weren't so serious, I should say that to put such a responsibility on our shoulders was an excellent joke. The problem is an administrative one, We are faced

with an immense task, a task as vital as the direction of the military operations. There must be somebody in charge, somebody who will assume the whole responsibility for the matter, somebody who can speak with the authority of a leading Cabinet Minister."

"Do you want your statement recorded in the minutes?" the chairman asked.

"What for? Will it make any difference?" I asked.

"When one says things as serious as you have just said, criticising the actions of the Government, one has to take full responsibility for them," the chairman said.

"Very well, put them in the minutes," I replied.

The real CNT representative attended next day's meeting. He was an engineer, and very intelligent, with a quite exceptional capacity for debate, which he showed in every word. The Socialist delegates could not stand up to him at all; he simply outclassed them. However, the meeting adjourned without any decision being reached. Everything was left in the air, and nobody had any idea whether the CNT representative was going to remain on the committee or not, or whether he did or did not agree to the idea of appointing two CNT delegates to each provincial committee. In fact, nothing whatever was accomplished, and that day the enemy made a bigger advance towards Madrid.

When the meeting was over I was buttonholed by the delegate of the Bank and Stock Exchange Clerks' Union.

"I am convinced that it is absolutely useless to appeal to the Government to dissolve this committee and take over the supply services," he said. "But I should like to have a talk with you about what this committee might do. Do you think we might be able to get it to do something effective? Because you know

as well as I do that if the committee doesn't do anything, nobody else will."

"Very well, let us try. Come and dine with me at the War Ministry, and we'll talk it over after I have finished work with the Under-Secretary."

At half-past one next morning I was at last alone with him in the office. The young man knew his job, which was banking and the Stock Exchange, and had a good grasp of economics and trade. He immediately assented to my plan.

It was as follows : The committee should be transformed into the board of directors of a great commercial enterprise which would function like a bank, with the provincial committees as its branches and executive agents.

The chief function of the latter, each of which would have its own manager, would be to take the place of the wholesale distributors in trade under normal conditions ; that is to say, it would supply the retailers, whose shops, though they had nothing to sell, were fortunately still open. These would supply the public in the ordinary way. Our problem, in short, was to replace the ordinary commercial machinery for the wholesale distribution of goods, which had completely broken down. Our organisation would also have the monopoly of foreign trade.

We drafted the outline of the proposed organisation that night.

We planned that the whole organisation should be under the direct control of the Minister of Commerce, none of whose duties, we decided, exceeded this in importance. Failing that, it should be under the control of a delegate of the Minister ; and it was essential that he should be a person of exceptional ability.

Immediately under his control there should be two departments ; an executive department and an accounting department.

The executive department would be subdivided into a statistical department, to keep track of supply and demand ; a sales department (this, of course, was its chief *raison d'être*) ; a retail department (to keep contact with the shops) ; a correspondence department, etc.

The accounting department would be subdivided into a stock-taking department and a book-keeping department. The latter would keep accounts exactly like a bank.

We drew up a schedule showing exactly how the whole organisation would operate, not omitting the smallest detail. We even drafted specimen accounting and statistical forms, etc. In the morning we had a fair copy of our work made by two typists, and at half-past nine, when the Under-Secretary came out of the Minister's room and Cordón arrived, my new collaborator and I went to submit our plan to the Minister of Commerce, and more particularly to secure the first thing needed for any commercial undertaking, namely, money.

Money was indispensable, for if the provincial committees were to send supplies to Madrid, it would obviously be necessary to pay for them.

At the beginning of the war the provinces had sent supplies of food to Madrid, and generally commandeered supplies ; but as Madrid did not pay for them and it was impossible to go on commandeering for ever, this source of supply had shrunk to practically nil.

The Minister was unable to receive us, but we were received by his Under-Secretary, who was so pleased with our plan that he went in to see the Minister immediately and secured his consent to putting the entire Ministry staff at our disposal. The latter had been completely idle, the functions of the Ministry having been suspended. Moreover, he gave us a free hand to choose whatever accommodation we liked for our work, and we chose the two top floors of the

Ministry. One we made the executive department and the other the accounting department.

My friend and I both feared we should be up against a lot of red tape. We were therefore agreeably surprised to find that the Ministry staff consisted of a number of enthusiastic young men who took to our ideas with alacrity. They gave us the names of the people in Madrid best qualified to take charge of the various departments, and that same morning we selected the best statisticians from the staff of the Ministries of Commerce and Agriculture. A Republican who had been the head of a big concern in London was chosen to take control of the buying department, and we picked the accounting staff from the personnel of the two Ministries and from the Banking and Stock Exchange Clerks' Union. It was frankly a good team, and my friend and I were pleased with it.

At half-past one we were told that the Minister had arrived and wanted to see us. He was that fine old Socialist deputy Anastasio de Gracia. He received us kindly, but showed at once that he knew nothing whatever about the things we wanted to talk to him about.

"In short," he said, "what you want is money, isn't that so? But before I can ask the Cabinet for money I must have a full memorandum and detailed estimates. I can't just go to the Cabinet and say I want so many millions. I shall have to explain exactly what the money is for. As soon as I have all the necessary documents, properly drawn up, I promise to ask the Cabinet for the money and to support you in every way."

"But, sir, it's very urgent. The military situation is such that not a minute must be lost in provisioning Madrid."

When the committee met that afternoon my colleague caught the chairman's eye and explained our project in full. While he was on his feet I found the

suspense almost unbearable. The thought that all these eloquent committee-men might tear our plan to pieces and vote it down made me positively sweat with anxiety. But nothing of the sort happened. Nobody even made any comment on it.

"Are you all agreed on the project of Major Martín Blázquez (I had been promoted) and the comrade delegate of the Bank and Stock Exchange Clerks' Union?" the chairman asked.

"Agreed!" they answered in unison. "Agreed!"

The debate on the question of CNT co-operation with the committee was immediately resumed.

When we could stand it no longer my friend rose once more and described our conversation with the Minister of Commerce and insisted upon the urgency of drafting a memorandum to enable us to obtain the necessary money as soon as possible.

A Socialist, the oldest member of the committee, advised us to use the 'Jesuit's peg'¹ and to draw up estimates for provisioning Madrid for three months. This would not be refused, and it would enable us to get down to work.

"If the devil is wise, it's more because he's old than because he's the devil," someone remarked, breaking the solemnity of the debate.

My colleague and I were empowered to draw up the necessary memorandum and estimates and submit them to the Minister. The interminable debate about the distribution of the seats on the provincial committees between the various parties was then resumed once more.

The credit we asked was granted some days later. Our organisation worked under the greatest difficulties, because of boycotting in high places. But I have

¹ In Spain it is said that when a Jesuit comes to a house, he very modestly asks only for a peg on which to hang his hat. But by dint of equally modest requests he very soon succeeds in gaining possession of the whole household.

always thought this more unconscious than deliberate, and the direct result of the ignorance and unpreparedness which was the source of all our troubles.

In spite of delays and obstacles, however, we succeeded in bringing food to Madrid, so much food, in fact, that the railway platforms were blocked, our transport facilities being insufficient to clear them fast enough.

The Republican forces, lacking ammunition, machine-guns, artillery, and supplies of every kind, were driven back to the very gates of Madrid. The Republic did not own a single fighter aeroplane. The few machines we had had been brought down in unequal combat with the German and Italian machines, who were now able to bomb and machine-gun our heroic militiamen at leisure.

The responsibility for these reverses was unjustly attributed to General Asensio, who commanded the Army of the Centre. To save Asensio's prestige, and realising that precious time that might have been used in organising the army was being wasted by the retention of the worthy Don Rodrigo Gil, Largo Caballero appointed Asensio Under-Secretary of State for War. It was on October 22, I believe, that Don Rodrigo returned to the command of the Artillery Park and General Asensio started work as Under-Secretary.

He arrived at the Ministry in the evening, before dinner, and had a long conversation with Largo Caballero. We dined as usual, and afterwards Asensio ordered everyone else to leave, so that he and I could work alone. His aide-de-camp remained in the ante-room to keep everybody out.

We spent until five o'clock next morning tackling the huge pile of accumulated work. When we had

finished it we devoted ourselves to the reorganisation of the whole routine of the Under-Secretariat and its associated departments, as well as to the proper organisation of the rear.

I was astonished at Asensio's extraordinary ability and capacity for work, and I felt that now the army was going to be properly organised at last.

Asensio possessed great military capacity and exceptional mental gifts. He had served on the General Staff, and had no superior, with the exception of Aranda, the military commander in Asturias.

In tactical matters he shared the mistaken ideas of every officer who had been through the Military High School, and, unlike Menendez, had given no thought to revising them. But his intelligence enabled him to see that modern war is an administrative problem, as he said to me that night.

"Everything must be organised," he said ; " men, *matériel*, transport, food, everything, including even enthusiasm. I hope you will help me in this task."

" You are right," I replied. " Everything must be organised. Modern war is an administrative problem ; and not only is it an administrative problem, it is a problem in accountancy as well ; we must keep our books with the strictness of a usurer. That is what gives Aranda his superiority over all the other rebel generals. He has the administrative sense, which is so rare in Spain."

We paused for a few moments to talk of Aranda. We agreed that it was fortunate for the Republic that General Sanjurjo, the intended leader of the rising, had been killed when the aeroplane that was taking him from Portugal to Spain to assume the supreme command of the rebels had crashed in flames, for Sanjurjo would have left everything in Aranda's hands. Aranda had been the real leader in Morocco when Sanjurjo was in command of the Army of the Protectorate ; and as the rebels' Chief of Staff and

real leader he would have been an incomparably more dangerous enemy than Franco. But, with Sanjurjo dead, there was not the remotest probability that Franco would put a man so immeasurably his own superior in a position of high authority. Under Franco, Aranda would remain in the second rank, and was condemned to obscurity.

At eight o'clock in the morning, when Asensio was informed that the Minister had arrived, he suddenly said to me :

"Get a car and leave for Barcelona this morning. Have a look at the munition factories in Valencia, and send me a report. But sleep in Barcelona to-morrow night. Investigate the possibilities of putting the Catalan industries on a war footing, and in particular find out how we can lay our hands on the five hundred chassis you tell me there are at the General Motors plant. In order to put them off the track, tell them that your mission is something else. There is another important task that I want you to carry out, namely, to recruit the officers in Catalonia who are doing very little there because the Anarchists don't want them, while we want them badly. Tell them in Barcelona that your mission is that. Also, I want you to clear up the disagreement about war credits with the Generalidad. I'll have a talk with the Minister, and I hope he'll agree."

"While I'm in Barcelona," I said, "it might be worth while crossing over to Mahón,¹ to see what is happening in that strategical key to Europe. Also, I'd like to find out whether we can get hold of the

¹ Mahón, capital of the island of Minorca, possesses a natural harbour capable of sheltering a whole fleet, and would be of unique strategic value in case of war in the Mediterranean. The British occupied the island at the time of the French Revolution. The place was rich in olive oil and poultry, and the British, running short of other provisions, improvised a sauce of olive oil and eggs, which later became known as *mahonesa* (mayonnaise).

several million cartridges that are lying idle there because of lack of powder."

"We'll discuss that by telephone. But if I can do without you here, you shall certainly go to Mahón."

When the orderlies came in to clean the office and take away the empties, I am bound to admit that I was staggering a little, though I had only had a few glasses.

I left Madrid by car and was stopped on the road by some Anarchist guards, who treated me rudely and violently and ignored my safe-conduct signed by Largo Caballero. They wanted me to get out of the car, and I heard one of them say: "That's another officer running away from fire!"

Fortunately another Anarchist arrived who knew me from my work in the militia department. He spoke to his comrades with authority, and told them to leave me alone and let me go.

I asked my driver, a Communist, why he thought they had wanted me to get out of the car.

"I thought they were going to shoot you," he replied, as if that were the most natural thing in the world.

After carrying out my orders in Valencia, I went to Barcelona. The buses, the trams, the taxis, and the Underground were running normally. Shops and cafés were doing business as usual, but revolutionary posters were everywhere, and there was a great deal of noise, caused by loud-speakers at every corner. There were numerous inscriptions on the walls, such as: 'Comrades, the revolution calls us,' and: 'This building has been collectivised by the CNT.' Many people were strangely dressed, sporting the Anarchist black-and-red.

To me the most surprising sight was militiamen, with their rifles slung over their shoulders, strolling

along the Ramblas arm-in-arm with their wives, often holding their children by the hand, or letting them walk in front.

Barcelona can compare with any city in Europe. Nevertheless, once more I found it far inferior to Madrid. The people of Madrid had realised that the war made revolution unthinkable, while in Barcelona they paid no attention to the war, but thought only of revolution. The handicap that this meant for the Republic was a serious thing indeed.

If a war is a difficult enterprise, making a revolution is no less difficult. But to make a revolution while at war is stark madness.

The Madrid workers and their leaders had realised this, but in Catalonia the professional revolutionaries had banished the common sense of the majority. They believed their hour had come.

I went to the General Motors plant, and the factory committee met to consider my request. I explained to them that, as the railway communications with Madrid were practically cut, we were forced to provision Madrid by road, and that we therefore needed lorries.

The committee gave me a sympathetic hearing. They all wanted news of the war and of their fellow-workers, the heroic militiamen of Madrid, and bombarded me with innumerable questions, which I answered, not without telling them some encouraging lies. At the first opportunity I returned to the charge and asked :

“ Well, what about the lorries ? ”

“ Don’t worry about that, comrade,” they replied. “ The comrade who just left has gone to summon the foremen of the various workshops to arrange shifts for mounting the chassis as soon as possible. We shan’t stop work till every single one of them is properly fitted up and ready to go to Madrid.”

I went round the workshops, accompanied by the

members of the committee. I was introduced to the workers, who came and shook hands with me. On leaving each workshop, one of the members of the committee said :

“ Comrades, we shall work hard for a few days to finish these lorries as quickly as possible for the use of our comrades in Madrid.”

I returned to General Motors next morning. The prospect of further contact with these workers, who so simply and patriotically wanted to help me, filled me with pleasure.

“ Well, how are things going ? ” I asked the two members who fulfilled the functions of manager and works engineer respectively.

“ All right, comrade. We have been working all night, and we’re still going full speed ahead. Part of the work is finished, and we have turned out thirty lorries already. But we have some very unpleasant news for you.”

“ Why, what has happened ? ” I asked in alarm.

“ Vallejo has forbidden the chassis to be mounted, and said that they must not be sent to Madrid.”

“ Who is Vallejo ? ”

“ He is the secretary of the Barcelona War Industries Committee. He found out that we were working for you, and ordered us to stop. We gathered our workers and discussed it, and voted to go on working, and so we are. But I warn you that this will expose us to serious difficulties, and I think you had better go and see Vallejo yourself.”

I found Vallejo seated at a desk full of telephones, which were constantly ringing. He sat there giving innumerable orders, as though he were a chief of staff. His face reminded me of Goya’s portrait of Fernando VII.

He unburdened himself of all his grievances against the Madrid Government, and unfortunately some of them were not unjustified.

“ You want us to put the industries of Catalonia at the disposal of Madrid,” he said, “ and now you want to take our lorries. But the Government refuses to grant us foreign exchange, which prevents us from buying raw materials and coal, and condemns our industries to unemployment. You people in Madrid are idiotic enough to order your army uniforms from the rickety industries of Valencia, simply because you are frightened of the revolution and don’t want to come to terms with us. Catalonia possesses perhaps the only textile and clothing industry in Europe capable of turning out in the space of two months enough outfits not only for our pathetic little army, but for the whole German Army as well. But, as the Finance Ministry won’t allow us foreign exchange, we can’t buy raw materials, and our industries are at a standstill. You’ll end up by buying your uniforms abroad, paying twenty times too much for them and getting bad quality into the bargain, while our workers are unemployed, etc. etc.”

“ Very well, but I want lorries, and I’m ready to pay for them, cash down.”

“ Nothing doing. Not a single lorry will leave Catalonia.”

I told this distinguished Anarchist that I did not accept his refusal and proposed to attend the meeting of his committee that evening to talk about my lorries, as well as to hear their complaints, which I would report to the War Ministry.

I saw several Ministers of the Catalan Generalidad, and found them in complete harmony with my views. They all promised to help me in my mission.

I also found the leaders of the *Esquerra*¹ full of patriotism and common sense. They seemed to me to be superior to the political leaders of Madrid. They

¹ *Esquerra Catalana Republicana*, the party of the Catalan Liberal Nationalists and the majority group of the Catalan Government.

possessed the administrative sense. Catalans have foresight, a quality totally lacking in Castile. But between them and the patriotic and industrious Catalan people stood the idiotic creed of Anarchism. In practice, however, its influence was very limited.

That night, when I faced the committee, I found them all waiting for me with their claws out. I briefly explained that the railway communications of Madrid were cut, and that we needed lorries for the provisioning of the city. I added that, if Madrid fell, Catalonia would be quite unable to complete its brilliant revolution, for the simple reason that it would not be allowed the time ; for with Madrid in the hands of the enemy Catalonia would not be able to hold out for a single day.

"I leave the decision entirely in your hands," I concluded, "and I shall waste no more words on the matter."

Two days later a hundred lorries had reached Valencia. The rest we adapted. They were of the Oldsmobile type, whose short chassis and powerful engines made them suitable for transformation into light tanks and other special-purpose vehicles.

I telephoned Asensio on the night after my work in Barcelona was completed.

"I want you to go to Mahón," he said, "because we are running short of 'cigarettes.'¹ I shall ask the Air Ministry to let you have a seaplane in the morning. Go to Mahón and get them to let you have the stuff. Get it ready for shipment, and we'll send you a destroyer to bring it back."

I did not go to bed. At midnight I was sitting in a café, and to my surprise witnessed a general mobilisation. A rebel cruiser, the *Canarias*, had bombarded

¹ 7 mm. ammunition.

the coast, and the rumour had spread that the enemy was going to land.

To me the idea of an enemy landing appeared absurd and out of the question, but evidently the whole of Catalonia believed it, for the mobilisation was so general that it was calculated that no fewer than two hundred thousand Catalans volunteered for action that night.

Observing the enthusiasm and sense of discipline of the Barcelona masses on this occasion, I could see no difference between them and the people of Madrid. They belonged, after all, to the same Spanish people. In the face of that spectacle, the huge hoardings, saying: 'Comrades, prepare for the revolution,' seemed not only stupid, but irrelevant.

It would be easy to liquidate the Anarchists, I said to myself, with this enormous patriotic majority. What an army we could make of these people! And if we made an army of them, it would be all up with the Anarchists, and with the Anarchists out of the way, how could Franco win? If we imported raw materials and put the masses to work in the factories, who would be able to defeat us? The Republic would be assured of victory.

At dawn, when I went to the seaplane base, all the seaplanes were out at sea, searching for Franco's men-of-war. One by one they returned without having found their target. The seaplane reserved for me also took part in the hunt.

In the officers' mess I met a man whose acquaintance I had made at poker parties in Madrid. I knew him to be a member of the Republican Left. His home was in Minorca, and he was waiting for an officer who was going to Mahón by air, in order to give him messages for his birthplace. He was acting as agent for Minorca in Barcelona, and was in charge of provisioning the island, a difficult task, which he carried out as well as he could with a fleet of sailing-boats.

He was surprised to meet me, because he had never before seen me in uniform and did not know I was an officer.

We had to wait all the morning, because the sea-planes were not ready, and it was finally decided that we should postpone our departure till sunset, in order to diminish the risk of an encounter with Fascist machines. My Minorcan acquaintance was very friendly and seemed very trustworthy, so I confided to him the object of my mission.

"I assure you that if you go alone they won't allow you to take any ammunition away," he said. "I know my fellow-islanders only too well. I shall have to go with you. We shall even have to address meetings together. But they will listen to me, and that will be sufficient to turn the scale in your favour. But without me they wouldn't take any notice of you at all. So I shall have to go with you."

"But it's a dangerous trip. Thank you, but I can't allow you to take the risk," I replied.

"I'm going with you, and that's that. Surely the least one can do is to take a risk for the Republic and for a friend."

Our seaplane set off one hour before sunset. My friend and I were squeezed into the machine in a more uncomfortable position than I have ever been in in my life. Some machine-gunners were also on board. Before we started one of the latter told the pilot to set off in the direction of Valencia to put the German and Italian ships outside the harbour off the scent.

"No, that wouldn't make any difference," the pilot replied. "They will know we are going to Mahón in any case, and will cable to Majorca to warn them to send up fighters to receive us."

Our Savoia machine, with its low speed and heavy weight, seemed as slow as a mule.

"Yes, she's much more of a mule than an aeroplane," the pilot said, when I commented on our slow speed.

My companion and I were packed in like sardines, and we could see nothing. Eventually the man at the rear machine-gun made signs to us, indicating that the island was in sight, but immediately afterwards the pilot suddenly opened the throttle wider and changed his course. My companion became alarmed. I no more knew what was happening than he did, and I jokingly suggested by signs that Fascist machines must be after us.

A few moments later the rear machine-gunner passed us a note from the pilot.

'Flying towards France,' it said. 'Fascist birds failed to attack us, no doubt owing to their limited range and to darkness. Out of danger now.'

I replied on the same piece of paper: 'I think we had better return to Barcelona.' But for the first time I felt strongly tempted to go to France and turn my back on this criminal and fratricidal war.

We made a somewhat risky landing in the dark in Barcelona harbour.

I again telephoned to Asensio, who said he would try to send a destroyer to Barcelona to pick me up, because Madrid had nearly run out of ammunition, and a fresh supply was desperately needed.

"If the destroyer doesn't come," he said, "perform a miracle or something, but come back with that ammunition!"

By hook or by crook we managed to get hold of a steamer, the *Ciudad de Tarragona*, in which we set out for Mahón at dusk the next night. The *Ciudad de Tarragona* was slow, but she was the best ship we could get. She was painted white, which made her all the more conspicuous.

"Have you got a revolver?" my friend asked me.

"Yes. Why? Isn't the crew reliable?"

"No, it isn't that," he replied. "The crew is entirely reliable. But this ship was at Palma de Majorca at the outbreak of the rising, and she was

seized by the sailors. On the way to Barcelona they shot all their officers. Consequently, if the Fascists catch us, they will shoot everybody on board, down to the stewardess of the first-class cabins. The revolvers are to commit suicide with in case of need."

With all lights out, we passed the German and Italian warships outside the harbour. We remained on the bridge with the captain, straining our eyes for the *Canarias* in the dark. After we had steamed for four hours we received orders from Barcelona to return at full speed.

As soon as we had disembarked, we hurried to find out why we had been ordered back. The reason was simple. Our intelligence service had deciphered an enemy wireless message ordering the *Canarias* to intercept us. Either the Italians or the Germans had informed Majorca of our departure.

There followed three interminable days of waiting for the destroyer. We dared not risk another attempt in the *Ciudad de Tarragona*.

On the afternoon of the third day I told Asensio on the telephone that there was no more I could do in Catalonia and that I could not bear eating my heart out in Barcelona waiting for a destroyer which did not come.

"We can't send you a destroyer," Asensio replied. "But the *Canarias* has just been bombarding Malaga, and as she's the only warship they have in the Mediterranean, you can go to Mahón to-night and fetch the 'cigarettes' in safety. There is hardly anything left to 'smoke' in Madrid."

The best way of deceiving others is to be deceived oneself. I succeeded in convincing the crew that there was no danger whatsoever, and we sailed in the *Ciudad de Tarragona* that night. So convinced was I of the

absence of danger that I went to sleep and did not wake until we were safely in the shelter of the guns of Minorca.

I was enchanted at the sight of the island, dotted with charming, plain white houses.

The officers had risen in Minorca, as elsewhere, but the non-commissioned officers, with the people's help, had easily overpowered them. Many of the officers had been executed, and the remainder were held prisoners in a ship anchored in the harbour. I passed near this ship more than once, and it was painful to think that among the poor devils peering at me through the port-holes there were almost certainly some who, though Fascists, were personal friends of mine. It was strange that not a single one of them had been left at liberty, for one would have expected to find at least one Republican among the hundred-odd officers of the garrison.

The non-commissioned officers had taken over, but several *coups* had taken place, and by the time I arrived several of those who had been most active in the suppression of the rising were in jail themselves. Nominally the government of the island was in the hands of a naval petty officer. But actually the island was ruled by the N.C.O.s.

The civil governor was a Socialist, a decent, balanced, thoughtful, kind-hearted individual, who was much criticised by the Communist, Socialist, and Syndicalist non-commissioned officers, who wanted to exterminate the Fascists, while he wanted to avoid bloodshed. In his eyes all the inhabitants of the island were brothers and good Republicans, while the non-commissioned officers felt there were traitors everywhere, in constant communication with the rebel island of Majorca, and that they must be exterminated at all costs.

My friend spread the news that I was a military secretary of Largo Caballero's and had come to the

island on a visit of inspection. The result was that during the four days of my stay I had to listen to continual denunciations and grievances. The civilians complained about the soldiers, the N.C.O.s about the other N.C.O.s, the Socialists about the Communists, the Syndicalists about the Communists and Socialists.

I sympathised and encouraged them all, and started talking to them about the ammunition, painting the situation of Madrid in the most lurid colours and explaining the vital necessity of saving it from falling into the enemy's hands. Everybody promised to help in loading the ammunition on to the *Ciudad de Tarragona*, but the days passed and still the ammunition was not forthcoming.

I was surprised to see that all the soldiers in the island, privates and non-commissioned officers alike, were wearing their uniforms with noticeable smartness. Indeed, I had never seen such smartness in the Spanish Army before. The order and discipline that the N.C.O.s required of their men was positively Prussian in its severity. After the free-and-easy ways of the Madrid militia, I could not get used to it.

I had to review all the troops and inspect all the coastal and anti-aircraft batteries. The mathematical precision with which the drill was carried out took my breath away.

I inspected the 38 cm. batteries which had been installed by Vickers just before the insurrection. I went down into the underground gun-pits from which these monsters were served. Each gun had cost millions of pesetas, and the electrical equipment and automatic loading devices made the place resemble a factory. To judge by their drill, the proficiency of the gun-crews left nothing to be desired.

The Vickers engineers had left behind instructions for handling these guns, but they were in English. The sergeant showed me a Spanish translation.

"Sir," he said, "the day after the rising I got hold

of everybody in the island who knew English and made them sit down and translate the instructions. Then we had them printed. All the gun-crews study them every day. We meet for study regularly, just as if we were taking a course at a university. A great deal of study is needed to use these guns, sir, because, as you know, of course, you even have to take the rotation of the earth into account ! ”

On the fourth day I felt I had wasted enough time. The cartridges and bullets were absolutely useless to the islanders for lack of powder, but there was still no sign of their being loaded on to the *Ciudad de Tarragona*. I therefore arranged a meeting of the governor, the military commandant, all the party leaders, and the N.C.O.s. I made them a speech, and concluded by asking every single person present to give me a definite answer, yes or no, to the question whether I should be allowed to take the ammunition or not.

Nobody dared to take the responsibility of a refusal. My friend had not been wasting his time, for by dint of persevering effort he had won the whole population round to my side.

Late that night we stood out to sea with our precious cargo. To have fallen into the hands of the Fascists now, with our millions of cartridges, would have been graver than ever. The risk that we were running made me genuinely afraid. But a gale was blowing, and the sea was so rough that I became violently seasick. So ill was I that I felt that to be sunk by an enemy shell would be an enormous relief. In this weather, I felt, the idea that the enemy might capture us on the high seas and take us into Palma to be shot could be definitely discarded. They could only shell us, and when we sank my sea-sickness would be over.

A lot of other stupid ideas passed through my head that night. It is notorious, I said to myself, that the Spanish Navy is so little used to the sea that the sailors

are sea-sick in every storm. Well, then, I comforted myself, to-night they are sure to be on land !

We reached Barcelona safely. It was Sunday, and the harbour was deserted. Nevertheless, five hours after my return, a special train left for Valencia with the ammunition. I had to leave one million cartridges as a kind of tribute to Barcelona, to be sent to the Huesca and Saragossa columns, whose ammunition supply was also very low.

I informed Valencia that the train was on the way, and a few hours after its arrival the first lorries loaded with 7 mm. ammunition, complete with powder, left for Madrid. When they arrived, the plight of Madrid was desperate, because 7 mm. ammunition had completely run out, and the great majority of our rifles were of that calibre.

Next day another boat, encouraged by our success, sailed out of Mahón harbour, which it had not dared to leave for a month. It was captured and taken into Palma, and the whole crew were shot.

CHAPTER TWENTY

A Real Army at Last

ON arriving in Valencia, I found that the Government had been transferred there from Madrid. My colleagues from the War Ministry had arrived the day before and established themselves in the Palace of the Marquis de Benicarló.

Despite the inevitable confusion due to our hurried move—what with carpenters, electricians, builders, and telephone mechanics adapting the building for its new use—the Ministry functioned efficiently at once, thanks to Asensio's drive and organising ability.

During my absence in Barcelona and Mahón the work had been reorganised. A technical secretariat had been set up, with Cerdón, who was now a lieutenant-colonel, at its head, assisted by two technical secretaries. These were Lieutenant-Colonel Cerón, of the General Staff, and myself.

Under the control of the technical secretariat were a number of departments ; the personnel department, the *matériel* department, the war experiments committee, the army pay department, the audit department, the co-ordination department, the court-martial department, and the engineering and supply departments. The work of all these departments, except in cases where it was supervised directly by the Minister or the Under-Secretary, passed through our hands, and our respective responsibilities were clearly defined.

Every morning at nine o'clock, as soon as Asensio had finished working with the Minister, all three of us would go into his office. He would hand us the hundreds of telegrams that had poured in during the night. After discussing the most important business, we would distribute the work among the appropriate departments, reserving the most urgent and complicated matters to be dealt with by ourselves. Each paper or document was stamped with the time and date and circulated systematically to every department concerned. We presented the papers and documents requiring Asensio's signature at 12.30 and 8 p.m.

Asensio had a prodigious memory and remembered the details of our work better than we did ourselves. It was never necessary to remind him of anything, and he always had a complete grasp of all that was taking place.

Lieutenant-Colonel Cerón was the only member of the staff of Asensio's Army of the Centre who had not gone over to the enemy. In the course of my career I had heard a great deal about his exceptional military gifts, but I had not previously met him. He had studied at the École Supérieure de Guerre in Paris, and had always held important positions ; among other things he had been secretary and aide-de-camp to General Count de Jordana while the latter was High Commissioner in Morocco.

He was known to be a close friend of this reactionary general, and to be very religious. I often heard it said that it was only thanks to General Asensio's influence that he had not been shot. But I was always convinced of his loyalty to the Government, though I realised that he was not a Republican. Few have done more valuable work for the Republic than he.

The most difficult of our tasks was entrusted to him, the distribution of the munitions which were beginning to reach Republican Spain from abroad. They arrived, by the way, in far smaller quantities than is believed in other countries. I developed great

respect and admiration for Colonel Cerón from my observation of his work.

I often asked his advice, and it was always invaluable, and I was proud that he often consulted me, too.

Every third day Cerdón, Cerón, and I would take it in turn to be on guard. On these days we would not leave the Ministry, but lunch and dine in a dining-room which had been installed on an upper floor. Asensio, who lived at the Ministry, presided at these meals, at which we were accompanied by journalists from the *Claridad* who worked in the Minister's own department. The war was never mentioned at these unpleasant meals, at which a coarse and frivolous tone prevailed, reminding me of other meals eaten in the encampments of Morocco. The staple subject of conversation was, of course, women.

After dinner Asensio would go with the journalists to some cabaret, where he would remain until two or three in the morning. On his return we would show him all the urgent or important telegrams that had arrived during his absence. He would give any orders and sign any documents that were necessary. At half-past seven he was up again, and all the over-night telegrams would immediately be laid before him.

Our most dreaded task was dealing with the General Staff in Madrid, whose reports on the events of the day came in by telewriter between eleven and twelve o'clock at night. These were the weeks of the Battle of Madrid, and Madrid made requests, endless requests. The desperate need for shells and ammunition was the perpetual refrain.

A few days before the seat of government was transferred to Valencia, General Miaja took command of the Madrid Division, replacing General Castelló, who was taken to a mental home. The Madrid Division

was practically non-existent, so the post was a sinecure, but when the Government left Madrid the defence of the capital was entrusted to him.

It gave me pleasure and a great sense of security to learn that Miaja's right-hand man was General Rojo.

I had made the acquaintance of Rojo, who was then a captain, in a somewhat unusual manner in 1934. He was studying at the Military High School, and I held a sinecure at Alcalá de Henares—one of the sinecures in which the Spanish Army abounded. It allowed me to live in Madrid. I went to Alcalá only once a week, taking the 8.30 a.m. bus from the Plaza de las Cibeles, which arrived at Alcalá an hour later. There I signed a few papers and returned to Madrid at noon. One day I found myself sitting next to an infantry captain wearing the Military High School badge. He was Captain Rojo.

"Are you a soldier?" he asked me.

"Yes, I am a captain, too."

"Well, then, I know you. In the bus last week you were reading a book I published. Naturally I like to see my books being read."

He told me that he went to Alcalá every day to attend the General Staff cavalry exercises that were taking place. He also published military books.

"I publish a book a month," he said. "Some of them are original Spanish works, but the majority are not, because, as you know, our officers write very little. All those who do write know now that unless their work is too bad I will publish it. But, in spite of that, most of the books I publish are translations, such as the works of Major-General Fuller, the Englishman, or new books published abroad. Most of the regiments and army stations subscribe, so that everybody knows the books are available if they want them. Most of them do not take advantage of it, however, but I am satisfied if some do."

"Do you get a subsidy from the Ministry?"

"No, and the consequence is that I make a small loss every month. But if the result is to make some of my colleagues read and study a little more, I am content."

I conceived a great admiration for this unknown captain who dropped a monthly bombshell into the stagnant waters of Spanish military officialdom, and I travelled several times in his company.

Curiously enough, our conversation generally hinged on a book by General Mola, which had just come out. It was intended to be a violent attack on Azaña's military reforms, but only exposed the defects of the author's own military education. It was the work of an intelligent general who had read nothing but bad books all his life. Rojo did not agree with Mola or with Azaña, for whom he had no sympathy, and his political views were obviously far from the Left. Nevertheless, when the insurrection broke out, he devoted himself to the service of the Republic with loyalty and enthusiasm. His personal and military gifts did noble service in the defence of Madrid.

The Government had not made its exit from Madrid in the most graceful manner. Popular opinion regarded the Ministers as little better than traitors taking to flight, and General Asensio was made the scapegoat. Nevertheless, the transfer of the Government was an essential measure, and the only mistake that was made was to delay it to the last moment, when the danger to Madrid was at its peak. Asensio told me that he personally would have preferred a transfer to Barcelona rather than to Valencia, for our maximum resources lay in Catalonia.

The Ministers and the various Ministry staffs found it no easy matter to get away. At Tarancón, on the outskirts of Madrid, they were held up by an Anarchist

column, who treated them with scant consideration, but finally let them go.

I was told that Asensio only escaped assassination because Cerdón, who was very well known and very popular, was in the same car, and consequently the men who had been told off to do the killing had not dared to fire.

The relations between General Miaja, President of the Madrid Defence Junta, and Largo Caballero and Asensio were not exactly cordial.

This became clear at the outset. Valencia ordered Miaja to send all the officers attached to the Under-Secretariat to Valencia immediately. Nevertheless, they remained in Madrid.

Madrid was in grave danger. Every day the Fascist wireless announced that the capital would be in their hands next day. But nobody wanted to leave Madrid. In spite of daily bombardments, its inhabitants still felt it was the best place in the world. They also disliked the idea of passing the Anarchist guards at Tarancón.

Several times I was ordered to draft urgent telegrams rebuking Miaja for disobeying orders. I was told to draft them as from the Prime Minister and Minister of War, because Caballero wished to sign them himself.

Miaja's replies were haughty and mocking. You could read the writer's thoughts between the lines. 'You are Prime Minister and Asensio is with you. But to the people of Madrid you are both deserters.' Later we learned that these replies came from the spiteful pen of the angelic Comrade Margarita Nelken.

Thanks to the presence of General Asensio, the information I gave about Minorca was put to thorough use. A colonel and several artillery officers, experts in coastal defence, were immediately sent to the island,

the ammunition I had taken was replaced, provisions and all kinds of war material were sent out, and other measures were taken which cannot yet be divulged. Henceforward everything relating to Minorca, even the matters which otherwise would have been dealt with by Cerdón or Cerón, was left to me. "This is for the deputy for Mahón, Major Martín Blázquez," they used to say.

I knew no details of the battles raging before Madrid, and, when I asked my colleagues, they proved to be as ill-informed as I.

I was particularly eager to solve the riddle of the tank. Could the tank be stopped, or was it irresistible? Most of all I wanted to know what had happened to our tank attack of October 29, when I was in Barcelona. My colleagues had been preparing for it when I left, and they had had high hopes of it.

One day the strangest man I have ever seen was shown into my office. Both his legs had been amputated at the thigh, and he looked like a gallows-bird, but he had intelligent features. Two orderlies helped him to take a seat opposite my desk.

He told me that he had been a Legionary in Morocco, that he had been wounded during the retreat from Xauen, after which the doctors had amputated his legs. But he had volunteered for the Tank Brigade as a machine-gun expert, and had been accepted.

"For handling the machine-gun in the turret of a light tank, it's almost an advantage to have no legs," he explained with great earnestness.

He said he had come from Madrid to apply to the Ministry for leather uniforms and special helmets for the Tank Brigade. He had been told that he could get them only through me, and he would not leave my office until I had arranged to supply them.

"Or until I ring the bell and tell the orderlies to put you out," I replied.

"You won't do that, major. I'm sure you realise that the Tank Brigade can't carry on without proper equipment."

I left my work to deal with his request, and gave the necessary orders for leather uniforms to be procured and the helmets he wanted to be manufactured. This took a certain amount of time, because the people I approached had to approach others in turn. Meanwhile my visitor went on chattering like a parrot, preventing me from getting on with my work.

He had taken part in the tank attack of 29 October, and told me that it had been a failure. He said he had attended many discussions among the militiamen on the causes of the failure. They attributed it to lack of artillery preparation and insufficient preliminary bombing from the air. But he did not agree.

"But do you militiamen discuss and criticise the conduct of military operations?" I exclaimed.

"Of course we do, major," he replied. "We have eyes and brains in our head just like our officers. As for tanks, we know at least as much about them as any of you, or rather a good deal more."

"Well, what happened?"

"Nothing whatever, because our forty tanks found themselves isolated almost immediately. A few machine-gun nests which we had been utterly unable to destroy were sufficient to hold up the infantry behind us. A tank attack is very easy. You cover the three or four hundred yards between your own line and the enemy's quickly enough. But the problem is to get back. You have to get back, because you can't hold a line with tanks alone, and you can't stay there to be mopped up by the enemy's artillery and heavy machine-guns."

"Which are the better, the Fascists' German and Italian tanks or our Russian tanks?"

" They are all very bad, but the German and Italian tanks are even worse than ours. All they are good for is to make the French feel nervous. But actually they are a damp squib. They are very impressive on the cinema, but in reality they don't cut much ice. When you get inside a tank before an attack you feel you are in a battle-cruiser about to demolish a wooden frigate. But when the enemy opens fire at you, not, of course, with rifle bullets, you feel like a hare, armed with a 45 mm. gun and one or two machine-guns, trying to hit a hidden hunter who is equally or better armed than you. It's obviously easier for a hunter, standing still, to hit a bounding hare than it is for the bounding hare to aim at and hit the hunter. And in this case the hunter can always fall back on throwing hand-grenades."

As I sat listening to this uncanny individual's somewhat over-simplified theorising, I was rung up by the Information Department (which is a kind of GPU), and a friend of mine who worked in that unpleasant department said :

" Isn't there a legless individual, who looks as if he were crazy, and belongs to the Tank Brigade, in your office ? "

" Yes," I replied.

" Very well, keep him there until we come, because we want to arrest him. We have received a serious denunciation of him from Madrid, and we were informed that he was applying to you for uniforms for the Tank Brigade."

Two powerful policemen came in and carried the man away like a child, without his attempting to resist.

During December, I lunched with an old friend, an Air Force major, who had been a colleague of mine at

the Academy and whom I had twice come across in Morocco. He was in command of one of our most important aerodromes and had come to Valencia for a conference with the Minister.

We both had very little time, and most of it we spent in discussing personal and other matters. It was only during the three-mile drive back to Valencia from the seaside restaurant where we lunched that I found an opportunity of putting a few questions concerning the war in the air. He answered in the laconic manner for which he was noted.

"How is the Air Force?" I asked.

"You know better than I," he replied. "You know every machine that we have been sent, because you know all about the cargo of each ship as soon as it arrives. We are pretty badly off, and a good deal worse off than the enemy."

"I meant, how are we off as to quality?"

"The quality of our machines is better than that of the German and Italian machines."

"Are our fighters really superior to those of the enemy?"

"Yes, but fighters are no longer the vital factor they were at the beginning of the war. At first our bombers, the ones that had been attached to the old army, were so slow that they fell an easy prey to the German and Italian fighters. Similarly the German and Italian bombers of the early days, who were able to bomb our militia at their leisure as long as we had no anti-aircraft guns and no fighters, fell like flies when the first Russian fighters arrived. At first we all believed that fighters were the key to everything. But now both our bombers and the enemy's are very little slower than the fighters. They are fast enough to be able to avoid combat if they wish to, and if they accept it they are so well armed that they can face the fighters on equal terms. Very few machines are now brought down in aerial combat,

although they are armed with guns (machine-guns are useless). But a great many are brought down by anti-aircraft guns. Although we are outnumbered, the superiority of the Russian over the German and Italian machines might have given us supremacy in the air, but for their ample supply of magnificent anti-aircraft guns, of which we are short, as you know."

"Who commands the Air Force? You, or the Russians?" I asked on leaving him.

"Listen, it would be stupid for me to try to mislead you, and even more stupid for you to think I should try. In the Air Force we exercise full control. The Russians are very tactful, and realise that we wouldn't take orders from them. I am surprised at your question, Martín, knowing you as well as I do. Or have you been listening to the nonsense they broadcast on the Fascist wireless?"

The Russian Embassy as well as the Government had moved to Valencia, and thus Michèle came to Valencia too.

We both worked from half-past eight in the morning till half-past nine at night, after which we used to meet at the Hotel Inglés, where I had a room. Sometimes we would meet at the Hotel Metropol, the seat of the Russian Embassy. But generally she came to the Hotel Inglés, and when I was late she would wait for me in the porter's lodge, listening to the broadcasts of the amusing and grotesque General Queipo de Llano and the comments made on them by the porter, a witty Andalusian. One of his sallies, which pleased her particularly, he often repeated, and I heard it several times myself.

"This general is worth a fortune," he used to say. "If somebody gets hold of him after the war, he will find him worth his weight in gold. I'm afraid they'll

kill him, but if somebody catches him alive and puts him in a cage and exhibits him all over the country, he'll make a fortune with him—he ought to be worth more than Belmonte¹—and become the richest man in Spain. Just imagine how much money you could make exhibiting him at fairs at one peseta a head! You could put him in his cage in full uniform, complete with sword, decorations, and moustaches, and take the cage about in a van. 'Who wants to see a real Spanish general in a cage?' you'd call out. 'Admission one peseta!' And whenever he didn't behave properly and failed to bluster as nicely as usual, you'd punish him, and not allow him a drop of wine next day!"

Every morning Michèle walked with me as far as the doors of the Ministry, which were protected with sandbags and machine-guns against the possibility of an Anarchist attack.

Michèle never spoke to me about her work at the Embassy, nor did I tell her anything about my work at the Ministry. All she told me was that the Russians were almost dying of cold, for the central heating was not working at the Hotel Metropol because of the coal shortage. The Metropol is one of the few buildings in Valencia equipped with central heating, which is quite unnecessary owing to the mildness of the climate.

One night I was very late, and found her waiting for me with some anxiety. I explained that I had been delayed by having to finish checking the accounts submitted by the Russian Embassy for the war material with which they had supplied us, and separating the items supplied to the Army from those supplied to the Air Force and the Navy, because the Ministry of Finance wished to make immediate payment.

"The prices are not unreasonable," I said, "but they are high."

¹ A famous bull-fighter.

“ Oh, yes,” she said half-jokingly, “ in commercial matters the Russians are as capitalistic as the City of London itself. Business is business ! ”

General Asensio's great capacity and intelligence were generally recognised, but he was accused of immorality and even of lack of enthusiasm for the Republican cause.

I don't know to what extent he had the Republican cause at heart, but he knew that if the Fascists won they would shoot him with greater relish than any Left politician. I also know that the most productive work done at the War Ministry corresponded with his period of office, and I consider it an honour to have worked with him. It was he that got the commissariat and supply services, the engineering service, the sanitary service, the petrol and oil service, the production of uniforms, etc. etc., properly going.

In order to achieve this he had to be a strict disciplinarian and do away with the tradition of *camaraderie* which had hitherto prevailed. He knew that under the prevalent demagoguery the strict fulfilment of his duties would only make him hated ; yet he fulfilled them.

The idea underlying all his actions was to enforce the recognition of a number of elementary truths which are valid in all armies at all times. He insisted, for example, on officers always wearing uniform, and showed the greatest intransigence in this respect. If an officer came from the front on the most urgent business and appeared in mufti, he would turn him out of his office without even listening to what he had to say.

“ You can come back and speak to me when you're properly dressed,” he said.

He also made one more enemy for himself each

time an emissary from some unit came from the front to appeal for boots, ammunition, blankets, or whatever it might be. These people were always told the same thing.

"The general has given orders that you are to be given nothing," they were told. "You belong to a 'century' or a company, or whatever it is that your unit is called, but over you there's a column commander, and over your column an army commander. The Ministry only deals with army commanders, and supplies of any kind are only sent to army commands. You must apply to your column commander, who will apply to your army commander in turn, and if he can't satisfy your request, he will apply to us."

This was no more than insisting upon an elementary rule, but strength was needed for it on Asensio's part, because it resulted in a great deal of unpleasantness for him. But he cemented the great work of transforming the hordes of militiamen into a regular army.

Few people were honest enough to admit it. At times of collective psychosis it is difficult to make people believe that you must start building a house from the foundations. Even the foreign military experts who came to Spain at that time failed to appreciate that self-evident truth.

But the foundations were gradually established and the Spanish people gradually learned the great advantages of discipline. The one redeeming feature of this destructive and disastrous war is that it has taught the Spanish people that discipline is as indispensable as the air they breathe. The time came when General Asensio ordered Cerón and myself to draft a scheme of organisation for the tactical units of the future army.

As Cerón and I were far too busily engaged on our feverish routine work to have time to meet and exchange ideas on the subject, we decided to draw

up independent preliminary drafts during such spare moments as arose in the course of the day. Subsequently we could discuss them with the general.

My preliminary draft was inspired by my innate antipathy to barracks, and the administrative unit called a regiment which occupies a barrack. I had considered the regiment obsolete as a unit as long ago as the Moroccan War, when, after the disasters of Anual and Xauen, a huge expeditionary force was sent to Morocco, where it failed to subdue a handful of badly armed Moors, provided only with rifles.

To maintain our struggle against the Moors we had finally formed columns consisting of one company either of the Foreign Legion or of a Moorish regiment, one infantry battalion from, say, Regiment No. 8, garrisoned at Lugo, another battalion from, say, the Seville Regiment, one field battery from some Madrid regiment, one cavalry squadron from the Regiment of Vitoria, one company of engineers from Valencia, one company from the Madrid Army Service Corps, etc. It was columns constituted on these lines which, with French aid, ultimately brought that war to a successful conclusion.

I became convinced that an army organised in regiments was a peace-time army. That is what the Spanish army was. All that it was good for was to march in processions or behind a brass band. But a war-time army, I felt, should be organised not in regiments but in tactical units, abolishing at a stroke the intolerable routine of regimental and barrack life, which added nothing whatever to the efficiency of either soldiers or officers. Each barrack could house a tactical unit of the kind outlined above, which would be ready to leave the barracks and fight at any moment. A unit composed of all arms could achieve an almost ideal standard of efficiency. The officers would learn

to command, and the soldiers would lose their dislike of traditional regimental drill.

In 1929, after the pacification of Morocco, Mola was the general officer commanding the Llarache zone, where I was stationed. He arranged a series of discussions on the eternal problem of the relations between infantry and artillery in battle. Once more the partisanship of artillerymen and infantrymen was thrown into relief. The discussion was entirely inconclusive. The officers from the Infantry Academy of Toledo contended that the artillery should be subordinate to the infantry, while the artillerymen maintained that they had no need of infantry advice in choosing their targets.

At these discussions the same officers always spoke. The rest, who were bored to tears and spent the time thinking longingly of the jolly little game of poker they were missing at the club, called them the 'highbrows.'

I speculated on what would happen if the field artillery were subordinated to the infantry and if the artillerymen proper confined themselves to the handling of heavy artillery and coastal defence and anti-aircraft batteries. The answer was that it would make no difference whatever. That settled the question. The notion that it was necessary to have studied at Segovia in order to be able to handle field artillery was antiquated and absurd. Infantry officers would have no difficulty in learning how to handle field artillery ; on the contrary, they would find it both easy and useful.

These and similar considerations guided me in my preliminary draft for the creation of the famous Mixed Brigades.

I remember that when General Asensio sent for Cerón and myself I collected my papers in a great state of trepidation lest my ideas should not be accepted. But, to my great surprise, they were taken

more or less as a matter of course. They turned out to be very much the same as Cerón's.

Asensio explained that he had played a little joke on me. It had already been agreed with 'our friends' the Russians that 'mixed brigades' were to be the basis of the organisation of the new army. He apologised for having told me nothing about it before, but he had wanted to see what I would think out for myself. Now he could tell the Russians that I had independently come to exactly the same conclusions as they.

"Or perhaps, on second thoughts, I had better tell them nothing of the sort," he added. "It will be better to tell them nothing, and let them think that we attach a great deal of importance to their opinion, because they are somewhat peeved at the little attention we pay them. As they are helping us, we must keep them satisfied. For the same reason, Cerón, as soon as we've finished this, I want you, with Martín's help, to draw up a scheme for the separation of the war zone from the rear. This again is to please them, because they attach a great deal of importance to the point."

"On that point I don't agree with the Russians," I said. "It has been amply proved in this war that trying to draw a dividing line of that kind is like trying to draw a line on the waters of the sea. Madrid, for example, is in the front-line, but contains industries which supply all the armies, including the rear. Whether a thing belongs to the front-line or to the rear does not depend on its geographical position. Everything taught in the military academies has to be revised and corrected in every war."

We dropped this question and resumed our discussion of the Mixed Brigades, for which we settled on a definite plan. While Cerón knocked it into shape I had an interesting discussion with Asensio.

"Now, sir," I said, "we have worked out a scheme

for the organisation of the army on paper. But that's like ploughing the seashore too. The real problem is how to get the militiamen into the framework that we have devised. 'Our friends' the Russians and other foreign experts may imagine that the Communists, the Socialists, and the Anarchists are only waiting for us to give them the word to sink their identity and become simple soldiers. But it would be madness for us to believe it."

"Well, Martín, and what shall we do about it?"

"I've had this idea in my head since July, sir, and so far nobody has taken any notice of it, but fortunately you are here now and I can tell you. You know that my plan to pay the militiamen ten pesetas a day was not intended only to save their families from having to beg in the streets of Madrid and give the men in the firing-line the assurance that if they were killed their families would not go hungry. In the chaos that then prevailed, the only means of coercion at the Government's disposal was money. That was why I thought the Government should use it; and that is why I now propose that we decree that those who decline to transform themselves from militiamen into soldiers shall get no pay. If we give every battalion a paymaster who will only pay men who obey orders, and if the paymasters of every Mixed Brigade are subordinate to the quartermaster attached to every brigade command, the brigades, and consequently the whole army, can obviously be organised at once. At the same time it will do away with abuses such as take place in the 'Iron Column,' which numbers barely three thousand men, but receives pay for six thousand every month."

"Very well, Martín, but that will only make me more enemies than ever. The whole Communist Party will be up in arms at once, because they will have to dissolve their Fifth Regiment, with its seventy thousand militiamen who draw twenty million pesetas

every month. And the Anarchists will kill both of us."

"You are mistaken about the Communists, sir, because I have often discussed the idea with their leaders. They say they are willing to sacrifice the special interests of their Party for the sake of the Republic, and are in favour of replacing the militia by a regular army. As for the Anarchists, they would as soon kill us for that as for anything else. But as soon as we have created our Mixed Brigades their influence will vanish."

"All right, Martín, we'll do it. Draft a decree along the lines you've just mentioned, with special attention to the battalion paymasters ; and see to it that nothing of the absurd book-keeping methods of the old army is introduced into the new ! "

"Don't worry about that, sir ! " I said jokingly. "The whole thing will run itself with the slickness and efficiency of an American business, and we shall have many imitators ! "

The decree was submitted to the Minister, and a fortnight later, after being approved by the Cabinet, it was published in the *Gazeta* and the *Diario Oficial*, dated 30 December 1936. In February 1937, the journalists in Government territory informed the world that the militia had ceased to exist and that the Republic had an army at last.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Malaga

ONE of the seats in the Caballero Cabinet was held by García Oliver, the Anarchist, as representative of the CNT. He was a young man, not yet forty years of age, but, like his fellow-Anarchists, Durruti and Ascaso, he had already become a legendary figure, surrounded by a halo of Anarchist mysticism. It would be difficult to imagine three more extraordinary or more romantic lives than those these men had led. They had been orators, writers, organisers, terrorists, conspirators, and bandits. With their flamboyant personalities, they were typical products of the Spanish people, which produced Cortez, Pizarro, Capaz.

When the insurrection broke out in July 1936, they threw themselves heart and soul into the struggle. Ascaso fell in the streets of Barcelona, and Durruti at the front before Madrid. Oliver became Minister of Justice.

In other words the Anarchist Oliver was dead, too. The merciless exigencies of war (after all the war was bound to have some good effects!) transformed him from an advocate of lawlessness to a man of law and order.

A few speeches he made at that time, a few brief conversations I had with him at the Hotel Inglés, where he was living too, impressed me greatly. I even decided that he was the most far-seeing and clear-

headed member of the Government, the one who was fondest of conjugating the verb 'to organise.'

In Saravia's time, I had one day at the latter's suggestion, prepared the draft of a decree to establish new officers' training schools. This decree had been subsequently published. The training of new officers was one of Saravia's preoccupations. At that time most people still believed that the rising was only an ordinary *pronunciamento* and that the war would be a short one. By publishing this decree, proclaiming to the world the necessity of training Republican officers, Saravia let it be known that this was not the view of the Minister of War. But the fall of the Giral Ministry, the Battle of Madrid, the transfer of the seat of government to Valencia, etc. etc., caused the decree to be forgotten. Oliver reminded us of it, and himself took charge of the organisation of officers' training schools.

In fairness to Caballero, it must be admitted that he gave Oliver his unconditional support. Cerdón and I made contact with him, but all we were left to do was to carry out his instructions. Quarters, instructors, equipment, and all other requirements were immediately supplied. Oliver was indefatigable. He arranged and supervised everything himself. He went into the smallest details, and saw to it that they were properly provided for. He even took an interest in the students' time-tables and the kitchen arrangements. But above all he insisted that the new officers should be trained in the strictest discipline.

I, who do not believe in improvisation, was astonished at the organising capacity shown by this Catalan Anarchist. Observing the ability and assurance of all his actions, I realised that he was an extraordinary man, and could not but deplore that so much talent had been wasted in destructive activity. Did not the famous Spanish scholar, Ramón y Cajal, once say that for lack of proper training and a national

ideal, talents in Spain ran to waste, just as our torrential rivers ran to waste, tumbling in their wild and tortuous courses into the sea without being canalised ?

García Oliver had joined the Caballero Government as the representative of the Anarchist masses, whose idol he had been, but all his prestige and authority over his followers had immediately disappeared. In the eyes of the Anarchist masses, entering a Government means taking part in the political game, i.e., recognising the authority of the State. Oliver had joined the Government to represent the Anarchists, but doing so was a violation of their creed, and hence he had committed a grave crime in their eyes. At least that is what I was told by a Catalan Anarchist who was a close collaborator of Oliver's.

"You talk in the classical language of political dialectics," I replied, "but I do not think you need use it with me. Let us talk seriously. The question is a simple one. García Oliver is an intelligent man who has come up against reality, and, as he is also an honest man, he has now developed a strong sense of responsibility. The Anarchist masses refuse to face reality, though it is obvious enough; they are irresponsible and unintelligent. I am only a soldier, and perhaps I am over-simplifying matters, but it seems to me that as soon as the leaders of the working-class parties, whether Anarchist, Socialist, or Communist, show themselves intelligent and honest enough to assume responsibility, they are necessarily deserted by the masses. In other words, either the masses are incapable of understanding sense, or the doctrines which have been taught them are false. I leave you to draw your own conclusions."

One night in January 1937 I was awakened by a series of powerful explosions. I decided to go to sleep

again, but the hotel employees' committee insisted on everybody's going down to the basement. The alarm had been given, but nobody knew what was happening. When the explosions ceased I went back to bed.

Next morning, when I went to my office, I was shown a shell from a naval gun, one of those with which the surroundings of Valencia had been bombarded during the night. Its markings were in Italian, and it was of a calibre that did not correspond to the guns of any of the rebel ships. I ordered it to be sent to the Artillery Park, to be photographed for the use of the Foreign Ministry and the Propaganda Department. Then I asked for details of the bombardment. Nearly all the shells had dropped outside the town, at considerable distances apart, and some of them had not exploded. Only one shell had caused casualties and damage ; it had exploded in a hospital recently opened at El Grao. There were seventeen victims all told, including the director of the hospital, my great friend Dr. Martin Perez, who was a major in the medical service.

I had made his acquaintance at the end of 1921, at an encampment called Mexerech in Western Morocco. A detachment of three hundred men who had been stationed there had been knifed to the last man by the Moors during the Kabyle rising in the spring of that year. It was during this rising that the disaster of Anual took place, and almost the whole of the Melilla garrison, numbering twenty thousand men, perished. These shameful defeats, which contributed greatly to the political convulsions in the years that followed, led to the sending of the greater part of the army to Morocco, where it remained until, with French help, the Arab rising was finally crushed and the whole zone occupied in 1928. An inquiry was opened by General Picaso, which clearly established the incompetence of the army, as well as the personal responsibility of King Alfonso, who, without the

knowledge of the Government, had arranged with General Silvestre, the commander-in-chief, the occupation of Anual which led to the disaster. A Parliamentary committee of inquiry was to have started its investigations in October 1923, but on September 23, General Primo de Rivera, with the King's connivance, proclaimed his dictatorship, suspending the Constitution and thus preventing the Parliamentary committee from meeting.

The detachment of about three thousand five hundred men, to which I was attached, bivouacked at Mexerech, and Martin Perez, then a captain in the medical service, was in charge of the surgical department. I had only recently received my commission, and both of us, like most of the officers in the expeditionary force, had been sent to Morocco compulsorily. We dined in the same mess as the officers of the Moorish battalions and the Foreign Legion, all of them old hands in the Moroccan service, which offered such splendid opportunities for preferment. They were in command of seasoned troops, who bore the brunt of the fighting and suffered the heaviest casualties.

My liking for Dr. Perez dated from the following incident. During a meal which, as usual, was cooked and served by Moors, a photograph taken at Melilla in course of one of the 'glorious' military operations designed to 'punish' the Kabyles, was passed round. It showed about sixty Legionaries of the detachment commanded by the then Major Francisco Franco. Each one of his men was holding a decapitated head by the hair. Every single officer found something witty or appreciative to say in praise of Major Franco, 'whom Rifi bullets could not touch.' Only Perez made no comment, and I saw a fleeting expression of disgust and sadness on his face. We spent the afternoon together, and a close friendship sprang up between us.

In his view the Moroccan War was primarily an inexhaustible gold-mine for the army. It meant promotions, extra allowances for foreign service and all sorts of speculation and graft. That, he maintained, was why it had lasted for thirty-five years.

I asked him why the generals in Morocco always split their armies up into small detachments instead of keeping them together and striking a final and decisive blow.

"You are mistaken if you think it is due to negligence or incompetence," he replied. "It is done deliberately, to keep the war alive. With small-scale 'operations' perpetually in progress there are always opportunities for promotion for 'distinguished service in the field.' Every time one of our outposts is attacked and surrounded by the Moors, there is an opportunity for a 'heroic' relief expedition to set out and succour it. That is why our army contains more 'heroes' than all the armies which fought in the Great War put together. Finishing off the war by a decisive victory would be killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. That will never be allowed to happen!"

I often served in the same garrison as Dr. Perez, and the persistence with which he denounced the 'heroes of Morocco' ended by positively alarming me. He seemed so obsessed with it that I almost believed he must be a little unbalanced. He regarded this plethora of heroes in a Spain which for a hundred years had been the victim of *pronunciamento* after *pronunciamento* as a phenomenon which ought to fill every thinking Spaniard with alarm.

"Are you as frivolous as all the others?" he once asked me. "Don't you realise the terrible danger of such a state of affairs?"

Then he added in a lower and less theatrical tone :

"Accustomed as they are only to fighting savages, in a serious war they would be useless. In a war with

a European Power they would fail hopelessly, even more hopelessly than the French officers, trained in colonial warfare, failed in 1870, when they were confronted with the German army."

After the occupation of the whole Moroccan zone in 1928, the 'heroes' were rewarded with a more widespread distribution of promotions than had ever taken place before. Men such as Goded, Franco, Mola, Varela, were made generals in spite of their youth. Many of the new colonels, lieutenant-colonels, and majors were no more than thirty years old.

I had an opportunity of talking to Martin Perez about it, and I was relieved to find that he had grown more dispassionate. He had replaced his tone of tragic declamation by another, not entirely untinged with humour. It was he who first told me the following anecdote.

A French business man from Casablanca came to Tetuan. Sitting on a café terrace with a Spanish friend, they saw a very young-looking general pass by. The Spaniard explained that this was the 'heroic' General Franco, aged thirty-four.

"You have no generals as young as that in France, I suppose," he added.

"Not at present," the Frenchman replied. But he added maliciously: "But once upon a time we had a number of young generals, and one of them was quite well-known."

"What was his name?" the Spaniard ingenuously asked.

"Napoleon Bonaparte!"

When the insurrection broke out in July 1936, Dr. Perez went to the Sierra at the head of a surgical unit. He remained there till November, never taking his clothes off, and performing operations for eighteen hours a day every day. A friend informed me that unless he were replaced there was grave danger of his collapsing or even dying under the strain. I had

little difficulty in securing his transfer to Valencia, where he was put in charge of the hospital which had now been bombarded. The same friend told me that the rebels had shot Perez's only son, a boy of seventeen, who was his father's greatest pride. A few days before the insurrection the lad had gone to Segovia for a holiday. He took no interest whatever in politics, but the rebels shot him for the crime of being the son of a Republican officer.

During the afternoon I went to the hospital to inquire after Dr. Perez.

"How is he? Is it serious?" I asked the doctor in attendance.

"Yes, very," was the reply.

"Will he live? Is there any hope?"

"No, it's only a question of hours."

"Can I see him?"

"Yes, but I advise you not to. He is out of his mind. The effect of the morphia has worn off, and he is delirious. You had better not go in; you will have a terrible shock."

I went in. Perez's hands were tied to prevent him from tearing the bandages which almost completely covered his face and head. His voice was just audible through the dressings.

"Long live the Holy War of Morocco, mother of heroes!" he was saying. "You gave us Franco, Mola, and Escámez! God be praised for it! Long live the heroes! *Arriba España!*¹ Long live Franco!"

The munitions problem haunted us perpetually. The quantities we received from abroad were never enough to give us even a few days' respite. They were just sufficient to fill in the fluctuations of our own production.

¹ 'Up Spain!' This is the rebel war-cry.

Our first preoccupation was Madrid, and other fronts had to be satisfied as best they could. But on most days we could not even fulfil Miaja's requirements. The requirements of other fronts were never properly fulfilled at all.

Absorbed as we were in work, the days passed quickly. Because of the munition-shortage I dreaded the hours I had to spend on night-duty.

Cerón always gave the officer on night-duty a complete list of our available supplies, down to the last revolver bullet. Our stock of the various grades of artillery ammunition never exceeded three figures, and we never had a million rounds of rifle ammunition. "All this is reserved for Madrid," Cerón would say. "Whatever happens, nothing must be sent anywhere else until the Minister decides to-morrow."

The military operations were supervised by the General Staff from their own independent office, but requests for ammunition came to the Under-Secretariat. That was the tragedy of our night-watches.

The appeals were not just couched in simple terms such as 'Please send to-morrow so many rations and such-and-such an amount of ammunition.' Officers commanding sectors telephoned in person, and told us that if ammunition were not forthcoming within so many hours they would have to evacuate and retire. A confirmatory telegram would arrive soon afterwards. Sometimes appeals of this kind would pour in from all fronts simultaneously.

In spite of explicit instructions to wait till next day for the Minister's decision, the position on some front or other would sometimes be so critical that we had to assume the responsibility of disobeying orders.

Demands would be backed by urgent appeals from the senior General Staff officer on duty.

"I have no objection to sending half what they ask for, provided that the General Staff shares the responsibility," we would say. "Can I tell the

Minister to-morrow morning that it was a joint decision ? ”

“ Certainly. It’s better to disobey orders than to be responsible for the collapse of a front.”

I was on night-duty neither on February 6 nor on February 7. On February 8 a rebel army, consisting of motorised Italian units, entered Malaga. On none of these three days was ammunition sent to Malaga, for the simple reason that there was no ammunition to send.

Our forces at Malaga were still less organised than those on other fronts, and they asked not for thousands of shells, but simply for rifle ammunition. We had had three weeks’ warning of the attack on Malaga. We knew that Italian troops had landed at Cadiz for the purpose, and we knew of the concentration of sixty German bombers. But we could do nothing to avoid the disaster. We hoped that a shipload of munitions might arrive to save us at the last moment.

Our forces in Malaga were behind schedule in the transformation from a militia into a regular army, and were worse off than other fronts both in quantity and quality of war material. Nevertheless I am convinced that if they had had ammunition, the ‘ glory ’ of the taking of Malaga of which Italy boasts would have been less glorious. Indeed, it is doubtful if they ever would have taken it at all.

Even with the very little ammunition at their disposal, the Malaga militiamen might have stopped the enemy’s advance on the mountainous road to Vélez if the Republican fleet had been able to help them. But the German and Italian command concentrated on making its intervention impossible ; and though the stratagem they adopted was unscrupulous, it must be admitted that it was extremely clever.

In July 1936 the Spanish Navy consisted of two battle-cruisers, seven cruisers, a dozen destroyers, and

about fifteen submarines. Of these the cruisers and destroyers were of recent construction.

When the insurrection took place, the crews of all these ships, with the exception of those of the cruiser *Almirante Cervera* and the destroyer *Alsido*, succeeded in throwing their officers into the sea or making them prisoners. But in the shipyards of El Ferrol, where their armament was being completed, lay the two most powerful ships of all, the *Canarias* and the *Baleares*, as well as the battle-cruiser *España*. During the whole of August 1936, the Under-Secretary of the Navy came nightly to our office to exchange views with us, and he invariably left a note in writing, asking us to arrange for the bombing of El Ferrol.

"A warship of greater speed and armament has such an overwhelming advantage," he explained, "that as soon as the *Canarias* and *Baleares* are ready for service the rebels will have the mastery of the sea. We must at all costs prevent the *Canarias* and *Baleares* from putting out to sea."

We managed to bomb El Ferrol several times with one of our few aeroplanes, but each time unsuccessfully. The rebels speeded up work on the three vessels, and soon had them ready for service. Thus the mastery of the sea was lost to the Republican fleet.

But though we did not possess a single ship which could offer battle to the *Baleares* or the *Canarias* and thus prevent them proceeding with their piracy undisturbed, our fleet as a whole was strong enough to offer battle to that of the rebels. The rebel fleet heavily shelled our militia at Malaga, and it was therefore decided that our ships should attack it.

Our cruiser *Cervantes* was out of action, having been seriously damaged on 22 November 1936 in the harbour of Cartagena, by a torpedo fired by a submarine of 'unknown' nationality. The calibre of the torpedo was 533 mm. and it had been manufactured at Fiume and was of a type different from

that used in our submarines, all of which, moreover, were on the Republican side. Franco had no submarines of his own.

On February 7 our whole fleet sailed from Cartagena to give battle to the *Canarias*, *Baleares*, and *Almirante Cervera*. Three destroyers went cautiously ahead to avoid the barrier of submarines of 'unknown' nationality intended to hamper our fleet; a submarine of ours having been torpedoed and sunk by one of these vessels a few days before.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon, opposite the Cabo de Gata, the destroyers saw two cruisers to starboard, advancing broadside on as if intending to open fire.

The silhouette of these vessels exactly resembled that of the *Canarias* and *Baleares*, and they continued to manœuvre as though they were the *Canarias* and *Baleares*, which the commanders of the three destroyers naturally believed them to be.

The latter kept them in sight as they drew away at high speed in a direction intended to lure our squadron away from the place where the real rebel cruisers were in action. In this purpose the two ships were successful.

After nightfall our destroyers reduced the distance between themselves and the supposed enemy, intending to attack. The latter then turned on their lights and searchlights and revealed their identity. They were the Italian warships *Muzio Artendolo* and *Diaz*.

Thousands of families from the zone invaded by the Italian soldiery fled from the 'saviours of Spain.' The entry of Franco's troops had taken them by surprise. Finding quarters for these thousands of fugitives was a new problem. Bare-footed, starving, and exhausted, this enormous multitude was yet delighted to be on Republican soil. Among them were many children,

and there were many families of seven or eight children or more. Many mothers had lost some of their children, many children had lost their mothers. They had walked for many days across the fields, had been machine-gunned by enemy aeroplanes and had suffered many losses.

Spinoza said that one cannot hate those who inspire pity. If men are God's children, that must be so. The opposite would be the height of villainy. But nothing enrages men more than seeing their own mistakes reflected in the mirror. The rebels, seeing the Spanish people fleeing from their contact, maintaining their human dignity in spite of all their sufferings, lost what reason they had left.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Wanted—a War Leader

THE Cabinet used to meet in a room next to our office at the Ministry of War. On these days the usual flow of callers at the Ministry, militiamen and others, was prohibited. At other times they came in a never-ceasing stream, with innumerable questions and demands, many of them absurd. We used to take advantage of the hours when the Cabinet was sitting for concentrated work. But sometimes, though free of interruption by visitors, we were interrupted by strident voices from the Cabinet room, which effectively prevented us from working. Loudest of all was the voice of Largo Caballero, the Prime Minister, who had lungs of iron despite his seventy years.

I often managed to exchange a few words with the Ministers as they passed through our room on the way to the meeting, each with a brief-case under his arm. I used to keep a look-out for Indalecio Prieto, the Air Minister and Minister of Marine, whom I considered the most intelligent member of the Cabinet. I always wanted to deduce his thoughts from his expression. I hoped that one day he would be Prime Minister. In my view the chief quality of a great war leader is neither imperturbability—'Franco is imperturbable'—nor is it audacity nor inhumanity. I maintain that the chief quality of a great war leader is imagination. That is why I thought that a man like

Prieto, who is all imagination, ought to be at the head of affairs. Indalecio Prieto never showed signs of either optimism or pessimism. The only emotion visible on his face was sadness, an infinite sadness, as though he felt some immeasurable grief.

Miguel Unamuno, who was self-centred, and never said a good word for anybody, criticised with particular vehemence the men who ruled Spain during the first two years of the Republic—Azaña and his colleagues—who tried to steer the weak old Spanish ship of state into less troubled waters. Prieto was the only one he never attacked. I once heard him describe Prieto as one of those rare men of exceptional natural intelligence who are born only once in a generation. "But I like Prieto's heart even more than his brains," he added.

It should have been the natural thing for him to have assumed the leadership of the Republic as soon as the insurrection broke out. For he had foreseen it and foretold it as an inevitable consequence of the suicidal revolutionary policy of Caballero and his followers, and of the unending upheavals caused by the Anarchists. Had the revolutionary Socialists and Anarchists been intelligent patriots, they would have been aghast at the result of their own criminal mistakes, and would have submitted loyally to Prieto's authority. But demagogues can never understand true patriotism, which goes hand-in-hand with the capacity for self-sacrifice. Thus, in the face of the catastrophe, Caballero had been unable to admit that he had been wrong and Prieto had been right. "Prieto," he might have said, "we have spent forty years in the Socialist Party together, and our recent differences have led to bitter personal antagonism. But in the face of this fearful civil war let bygones be bygones. It is for you to take the lead, for you are more able and intelligent than I, and I shall give you my unconditional support."

If Caballero had made a declaration of that kind, the political, and with it the military problem, could have been solved. For the political problem underlies everything. As long as it is unsolved, no other problem, whether military or economic, can be satisfactorily settled.

Caballero, however, sought the support of the CNT, and the political problem remained unsolved. There were two groups in the Ministry. The first consisted of Caballero and the Anarchists, the latter regarding the disappearance of the armed power of the State, the police, the Civil Guards, and the army, as an ideal opportunity for the achievement of complete Anarchism. The second consisted of the moderate Socialists, Prieto and Negrin (the latter quarrelled with Caballero and ceased to be on speaking terms with him), the Communists and the Liberal Republicans. The latter group wished to create a State with an army to defeat the rebels and a police force to re-establish law and order.

The strange thing about this political constellation was that Caballero also wanted to create an army and a police force. But above all he wanted to prevent Prieto from becoming Prime Minister.

During moments of crisis, whenever a grave defeat occurred, or a particularly flagrant case of Italian or German intervention, all the Ministers were patriotically united. But their unity was only of short duration, and the old antagonisms very soon revived. For all political parties carry about with them the dead weight of their reciprocal and internal struggles, which they can never throw off.

Meanwhile the militiamen at the front continued to display the one inalienable Spanish virtue—courage. They believed that all political differences had been forgotten. Internecine struggles within the Cabinet would have seemed monstrous to them while they were so lavishly giving their blood for the Republic.

They laid down their lives not for Communism, Anarchism, or Socialism, but in defence of liberty.

In Spain there has always been a huge gap between the governors and the governed. During the reign of the Habsburg and the Bourbon dynasties, the State had no profit from the energy and wisdom existing among the people. They deliberately isolated the Spaniards from public affairs, and this four-century-old practice of the Spanish monarchs constitutes the final justification of the Republican system, the only one able to identify the Spanish state with the Spanish people, which hitherto had been criminally divided.

The Spanish state has always been greatly inferior to the Spanish people, from which it has been deliberately cut off by high dividing walls. This was clearly seen by George Borrow more than a century ago, when he wrote a magnificent book about Spain. 'Georgie, the Englishman,' as the Spaniards used to call him, had an intimate knowledge of the Spanish language and the Spanish people, and he had a profound understanding of the national character. He travelled the highways and the byways of Spain, propagating the Gospels, and he had dealings with Spaniards of all classes. He was in love with Spain and its people, for whom he had a tremendous admiration; he knew and studied them all with deep understanding, the gentlemen and the vagabonds, the cunning and the stupid, the educated and the illiterate.

One day he had an interview with Isturiz, the Prime Minister, and this was a great eye-opener to him, and his love of Spain was rudely shocked. "How can a country of such magnificent people be ruled by an idiot like Isturiz?" he asked.

The Caballero Government was also inferior to the Spanish people, which was shedding its blood in defence of the democratic ideal. The squabbles between the Left Wing Socialists and Anarcho-Syndicalists and the moderate Socialists and Communists were unworthy of the gallant men on the battle-front. The Liberal Republicans in the Government were alarmed and saddened by the situation.

In the face of the tragic experience of Malaga, the great mass of the people wanted unity of command, discipline, patriotism, and a spirit of self-sacrifice. The Communist Party very intelligently made itself the champion of these demands. It organised a great popular demonstration in Valencia calling for unity of command.

The Caballero group immediately started talking of 'Communist intrigues' and 'orders from Moscow.' But I regarded the demonstration as a very intelligent tactical manœuvre, even if it was not incompatible with intrigue and obedience to orders from Moscow. But it was not incompatible with patriotism either, and was in accordance with the general policy of the Communist Party.

On the last Sunday of February 1937 the whole population of Valencia turned out and demonstrated beneath the windows of the War Ministry. Largo Caballero greeted them from his balcony, and their discipline caused general surprise.

Nevertheless, the demonstration was directed against Caballero, and from that moment the influence of that idol of the working class started to decline. The implication of the whole demonstration was that all our defeats were due to his defective leadership. Some groups cheered him, but without real enthusiasm.

I heard Caballero's out-and-out partisans maintaining that if he clung to office it was not for the sake of power, but for the sake of preventing it from falling

into the hands of the agents of Moscow. I also heard Communists declaring that for the country's sake they could not permit an old man lacking in organising ability to go on governing at such a critical time. He had, they said, sufficient failures to his account. The Liberal Republicans remained neutral in this controversy. They deplored the whole situation, as I did myself.

I felt that both parties to the dispute were inspired by patriotic motives. But I felt, too, that patriotism is a coat that can be cut to any man's cloth.

The attack on Caballero affected his position, without, however, bringing about his resignation. He remained Prime Minister, but his hold was precarious. The Communists, deciding that the time for overthrowing Caballero was not yet ripe, launched a furious campaign against General Asensio, whom they called in their newspapers the 'general of the defeats.'

They severely criticised him for having spent the night on which Franco's troops entered Malaga in a cabaret, and unjustly blamed him for the munition shortage which had been responsible for Malaga's fall. Many of my colleagues in the Ministry supported this campaign. I felt that the reason for their hatred of Asensio was that he had so frequently exposed their incompetence. They certainly made no attempt to conceal their resentment of him. They did not dare to question his capacity, but accused him of lacking enthusiasm for the Republican cause.

All this alarmed me and added to my dejection. Much fertile work had been done under Asensio's leadership. Thanks to his energy, the creation of the Republican Army was a *fait accompli*, and, Saravia and Menendez being out of the running, as they did not enjoy Caballero's favour, there was no one to replace

him. I was appalled at the prospect of having to work under some incompetent substitute. The situation seemed to forebode nothing but evil, and we seemed to be set on mutual destruction.

My dejection did not escape the sharp eyes of Michèle, and she was the only person in whom I confided. She had been a member of the Communist Party for fifteen years, some of which she had spent in Russia. But now, at the height of the civil war, she was beginning, so she said, to lose her illusions.

"To lose one's illusions and be able to laugh at them is the supreme test of a sense of humour," she said. "But I am afraid that my sense of humour may be taking me in a direction that is incompatible with Marxism."

"Do you remember your geometry?" I replied. "Two lines which lie in different planes can never meet. Marxism and humour can never meet, because they lie in different planes."

Michèle was often able to distract me from my gloomy mood by making me look at the gravest events with a humorous eye.

"In Russia," she explained, "as soon as anything goes wrong, the 'experts' start looking for individuals whom they can hold responsible. And if things don't go wrong, they start looking for 'traitors.' You Spaniards may be very refractory to the spirit of the Kremlin, but you are starting to copy it. Perhaps now you will start understanding why they are sacrificing General Asensio."

A strange thing happened to me a few days before Asensio's resignation. It was on a Monday morning. I had been on night-duty, and after I had finished work with Asensio, he told me to return to my hotel for a rest.

I walked back to the hotel, and found two armed men waiting for me at the door.

"Are you Major Martín Blázquez?" one of them asked.

"Yes. Why?"

"Nothing. Come with us. You are under arrest."

"Nonsense!" I replied. "There must be some mistake. I've just come from the Ministry. You're certainly making a mistake."

"You must come with us. If it's a mistake, it will be cleared up."

In my *naïveté* I felt so convinced that it was a mistake that it did not even occur to me to telephone to the Ministry to inform them of my arrest. But the hall-porter rang up Asensio as soon as the two men had put me into a car that was waiting at the door. They took me to a house on the other side of the river, where I waited for the appearance of the FAI intelligence officer who would decide my fate. But I did not have long to wait, because in the meantime Asensio had started moving heaven and earth, with the result that a patrol of Assault Guards promptly arrived and sharply insisted on my being delivered up to them.

I went back to the Ministry with the Assault Guards and the two men who had arrested me. When Asensio saw me he burst out laughing.

"For the time being you're out of danger," he said. "They won't bump you off this time! This isn't the right moment for taking people for a ride!"

The two Anarchists defended themselves by explaining that I had been having very suspicious telephone conversations at night with a foreign woman—Michèle—and that they had been given orders to arrest me on leaving the Ministry.

It took a long time to convince me that the FAI had

intended to shoot me, but finally I had to submit to the evidence that Asensio had saved my life.

One day at the beginning of March—I no longer remember the exact date—after we had finished working with Asensio, he said :

“The Minister has accepted my resignation. Cerón, you will take charge of the Under-Secretariat until the new Under-Secretary, Señor Baraibar, who is now abroad, takes over.”

Then he thanked Cerón, Cerdón, and myself for our co-operation and took his leave.

All Cerdón's satisfaction at Asensio's fall immediately disappeared. It was like a slap in the face to him to have to remain chief of the technical secretariat while Cerón became Acting Under-Secretary. Boiling with indignation, he went to see the Minister to protest at Asensio's having been replaced by a monarchist like Cerón. He had hoped to be appointed Under-Secretary himself, and his disappointment was extreme. Cerdón was ambitious.

Largo Caballero's private, military and political secretary was a journalist from the *Claridad* named Aguirre. He had conferred upon himself the rank of infantry captain. Presumptuous and stupid like all the rest of the staff of that paper, he had started behaving as if he ruled the roost. He prevented Cerdón from entering the Minister's office, and told him no object would be served by his seeing the Minister, as he had been dismissed from the Ministry and ordered to go to the Cordova front.

Cerdón, more furious than ever, came straight to tell me what had happened, and said that in his opinion a clean sweep was to be made of all the Republicans in the Ministry.

“This ‘Spanish Lenin’ will be left with a staff of

monarchists," he declared. "Martín, try to find out which front they are sending you to. Whatever happens, we must stick together. But we shall come back, and it won't be long before I shall be Under-Secretary. The first thing I shall do will be to tell this infantry captain that an infantry captain's place is in command of a company, and I shall send him to a Shock Brigade!"

Whether because my services were regarded as more essential, or because I was believed to be less of a sympathiser with the Communist Party, I was not dismissed from the Ministry as so many others were. On the contrary, I had to do Cerdón's work in addition to my own. Some of my colleagues, including Caballero's aide-de-camp and Díaz Tondero, were sent to the Army of the North at Bilbao. I confess I was alarmed at the prospect of being vindictively sent there myself. I was very pessimistic about the prospects on that front. I had made frequent requests for supplies for Bilbao, but they had all been rejected. "We shall send nothing to the Army of the North," I had been told. "Let the Basques look after themselves! What have they got an independent Republic for?" In view of this short-sighted policy, being sent to the Army of the North obviously meant a very good chance of ending up before a Fascist firing-squad.

Lieutenant-Colonel Cerón, however, regarded his appointment to his high office as a bitter blow, and it oppressed him greatly. But how many of his colleagues envied him! Envy is the greatest Spanish defect.

I felt more drawn to Cerón than ever. I felt more respect and esteem for his intelligence, discretion, and sobriety of judgment, monarchist though he was, than for the doubtful capacities of the noisy and stupid Leftists.

I could not but approve of Caballero's choice of him. He stood head and shoulders above the rest of us. But I could not help wondering at the strange things

that happen in revolutions. Cerón had been secretary to the reactionary Count de Jordana, and the latter's successes had been generally attributed to him. Jordana was now the real head of Franco's Government, and Cerón, instead of being Jordana's right-hand man, was right-hand man to Largo Caballero. This situation seemed so absurd that it made one despair of the futility of revolutions.

In 1930, when the Count de Jordana was High Commissioner in Morocco, I heard divergent opinions about him. Some said that he was an armchair general with only a little more intelligence than most of his colleagues, others said he was clever at choosing his collaborators, as was proved by his choice of Cerón. Others, including Dr. Martin Perez, contended that he was 'his father's son.' Had his father not been High Commissioner, too? Otherwise, he maintained, he would still be a simple major, like his contemporaries. Perez conceded that the Count's father had had one great merit. Any other man who had been High Commissioner for so many years, including the four years of the Great War, when the Moors could not get arms or ammunition, would hardly have been able to help pacifying Morocco completely, which would have been foolish. But General Jordana, a true aristocrat and gentleman, had skilfully kept 'the sacred fire,' i.e. the war against the Arabs, alive, and had succeeded in having his son made the youngest general in the Spanish Army.

"Thus he did great service," Martin Perez concluded, "and earned the eternal gratitude of the army. But for him we should not have so many 'heroes' to-day, and Franco would be an obscure, paunchy, and vulgar infantry major."

The barbaric and cowardly bombings and bombard-

ments of the civil population of Madrid continued. The Fascists, unable to take the capital by storm, launched one bombardment after another. A sinister quality was given to the casualty lists by the large number of children that figured in them. The children of Madrid were said to be playing with fragments of shells and bombs.

"How many children?" was always the first question we asked at the Ministry when the daily casualty list was brought in.

There would be sixty, eighty, or more. It saddened and infuriated us at the same time.

Somebody would say we ought to take reprisals. He would suggest sending every available bomber to one of the 'monastery towns,' Burgos, Salamanca, Avila or Segovia, and rasing it to the ground.

But no such thing was ever seriously contemplated.

Such incidents took place several times. But whenever anyone made such a proposal there would always be someone among us who would tell him to shut up and not be a fool.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Guadalajara

A FEW days later Señor Baraibar, editor of *Claridad*, the paper that had been founded to split the Socialist Party, arrived from abroad to take up his duties as Under-Secretary of State for War. Needless to say, he knew nothing whatever about military affairs. Personally, he treated me with great consideration, but I could not forget that the foundation of his paper had, in my view, been the signal for the catastrophe. The staff of that paper were all round me now.

The first thing that happened was that a part of the Anarchist 'Iron Column' before Teruel revolted against the imposition of my decree concerning the financial organisation of the army. They maintained that the Government was turning into a counter-revolutionary Government and that it was organising an army of mercenaries to deprive the people of its conquests of July 1936, when the army and the police forces had disappeared. They demanded that the money for the whole column should be paid *en bloc* as before, and refused to submit either to the organisation of battalions or to the new financial arrangements. The Paymaster's department applied to me for instructions whether to pay them as before or to enforce the decree. Without consulting anybody I gave instructions that the decree should be enforced.

We had to send police from Valencia, as well as a

column we had been keeping in reserve for the defence of the coast. After some fighting, and some shooting and sacking on their part, the Anarchists were surrounded in the village of Chantada. Then a compromise was reached. The Government agreed to hand over the prisoners they had taken, and undertook not to take reprisals and to pay them for the last time the fantastic sum they had been receiving hitherto. The Anarchists on their side agreed to accept the disputed decree from the following month onwards.

This rising caused us great anxiety. As in the case of all other Anarchist disturbances, it coincided with grave events at the front. The Italian Army was reinforced after its capture of Malaga, and started a big offensive in the direction of Guadalajara.

As the author of the decree, I received many threats to my life. In Anarchist eyes I obviously embodied the counter-revolutionary spirit of the Government.

The Spanish attitude to France is divided. With the great majority of the Spanish people France and the French are popular. Included in this majority are those aristocrats who have lived in France, or were educated there ; also everybody who voted for the Popular Front in February 1936. But all the Spanish reactionaries hate France fiercely, because she is the country of Voltaire.

The reactionaries hate England, too. They hate her as the country of Liberalism, and even more because she defeated the invincible Armada and is the mistress of Gibraltar.

These dislikes are rooted in the deepest defects of the Spanish character, envy and false pride. They are much more prominent among the privileged

classes than among the people, who are more humane.

The Spanish reactionaries are convinced that the reason why they lost the largest colonial empire that the world had ever known was because they were basely attacked and robbed by the English and the French. That is something they will never forgive. But the Spanish people have no reason to study history books to know that the Spanish Colonial Empire was lost because of the incapacity of the Spanish State, whose inept absolutist policies depended on the whim and caprice of a privileged few whose sole interest in the colonies was to exploit and plunder them.

But all Spaniards agree about the Italians. I have never found a Spaniard who liked them. Like all feelings of this kind, it is unjustified, but it exists. Before the civil war all Spaniards, whether of the Right or of the Left, despised the Italians. Now they hate them.

The Republican militia before Madrid, accustomed to fighting first-rate troops such as the Moors and the Foreign Legion, found the Germans and Italians easy prey. They repeatedly repulsed their attacks with ease.

Franco, having lost the Battle of Madrid, tried to capture the capital another way. On 8 March 1937, the rebel army opened a big offensive at Sigüenza, striking towards Guadalajara. The object was to cut all Madrid's remaining communications. The attacking army consisted of about forty thousand Italians under the command of General Bergonzoli, who had entered Addis Ababa in May 1936, at the head of a motorised division. It was supported by all the tanks, both German and Italian, that the rebels had available, numbering about two hundred in all, and an immense amount of war material of all kinds. The first result was a rebel break-through to a depth of

thirty miles ; the resistance of the weak and scattered Republican forces in that area was easily broken.

The news reached us in Valencia in an incomplete and particularly alarming form, and, busy with the Anarchist problem as we were, we were even more alarmed than was necessary. Fortunately we soon learned that the defeat had been converted into a smashing Republican victory.

The rebel offensive was based on a sound strategical plan, but the tactical preparations for it were bad, and its execution even worse. The infantry, despite the abundance of lorries, was unable to keep pace with the tanks, and so was the artillery. It is well known that tanks cannot hold occupied territory.

When the Republican Army of Madrid hurried to the scene of battle with all the tanks at its disposal, it found that the enemy infantry had arrived too late to occupy the ground properly, and was altogether unsupported by field artillery and anti-aircraft guns. The morale of the Republicans, who knew they were only up against Italians, was at its height. Though their infantry, too, was unable to keep pace with the tanks, they counter-attacked with the greatest success. But the real cause of the decisive Italian defeat was the counter-attack from the air.

The Italians had made the mistake of attacking without having established proper air bases ; and, with their land forces disorganised by the rapid advance, they found themselves suddenly exposed to the attack of seventy Republican machines, who had a complete mastery of the air and were able to sow panic and destruction in their ranks at leisure. The officer in command of this mass attack from the air, who himself flew over the terrain during the last operation, told me that he would never have credited the completeness of the Italian debacle if he had not seen it with his own eyes.

On March 13, after the complete defeat of the

Italian 'volunteers,' their commander received the following telegram :

'The Commander, Volunteer Troops, General Headquarters, Arcos. Year XV of the Fascist Era. On board the *Pola* sailing to Libya, I receive a *communiqué* informing me of a great battle in the direction of Guadalajara. I follow the course of the battle, sure of victory, sure that the *élan* and tenacity of our legionaries will overcome the resistance of the enemy. To defeat the forces of international Bolshevism in the field would be a success of great general and political importance. Inform the legionaries that I follow their progress, which will be crowned with victory, hour by hour.

'Mussolini.'

After General Asensio's resignation, the Communist Press persisted with its campaign against Largo Caballero, in which it was joined by the moderate Socialists and the Liberal Republicans. They all maintained that, as Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of all the armies in the field at the time of our defeats, the responsibility ought to be attributed to him and not to General Asensio who, though a traitor, had only been Under-Secretary. General Toribio Martinez Cabrera, who had succeeded Estrada as Chief of Staff, was coupled with Caballero in these attacks. Cabrera had belonged to the old General Staff, and was one of the few generals who remained loyal to the Republic. He did so not because he was a Leftist, which he certainly was not, but because revolt against a constitutional government was repugnant to him. He had voluntarily put all his somewhat moderate gifts at the service of the Republic.

The newspaper attacks were extremely violent, and

the Communist Press, which is not delicate in its choice of words, was most violent of all. Caballero's Press replied in similarly violent terms, and declared that the object of the campaign against Caballero was to bring Prieto, whom they accused of being willing to come to terms with the enemy, into power.

Much as they would have liked to, they did not have the courage to add that their opponents wanted to hand the Government of Republican Spain over to Russia.

These newspaper diatribes appeared absurd to me, but the result was that the Under-Secretary, as a good journalist, paid more attention to them than to military affairs. As in the times of Rodrigo Gil, unanswered questions accumulated in our files. No useful work was done, and there was an end of the productive rhythm which Asensio had injected into the military administration. We had to find odd moments, at night, to secure Baraibar's signature for important documents. When he asked for explanations, more than once he exclaimed: "Dear me! aren't these military matters complicated? What a lot of things to remember!"

I took no definite side in these struggles. Caballero had aged rapidly in recent months, and I sometimes felt sorry for him, since it seemed wrong that the head of a Government should be so ruthlessly attacked at such critical times. But I found his entourage intolerable, and I could not bear any of the numerous *Claridad* journalists who were employed as his private secretaries. As soon as Asensio and Cerdón had gone, they all wanted to interfere with specifically military matters, and always, of course, bungled everything. As is often the case with those who have been rabid anti-militarists, they loved giving orders. The Ministry orderlies, nearly all of them old men who had worked there for nearly thirty years, had never been ordered about in such a domineering and authoritative

fashion. What disgusted me most was the fact that these were the very people who had publicly proclaimed the impossibility of a military insurrection.

It may be too much to say that in wars not the best but the worst men come to the top. But it seems to me to be indisputable that in revolutionary wars only the most unscrupulous can prosper. Revolutionary wars are the great opportunity of intriguers, doctrinaires, and inquisitors.

I was strongly convinced of this by my experiences in March 1937. Fortunately the political situation in the Republican camp has greatly improved since then, under the leadership of Dr. Negrin. But at that time it could hardly have been worse.

During that month I found it utterly intolerable. Everything I saw disgusted me. Occasionally, I tried to find out why some important task had been entrusted to this or that individual. Generally the reason was that he had been at the head of one of the hundreds of absurd strikes which had been launched before the rising. In their presence I asked myself: What have I in common with these people? And I had to confess that they were separated from me by no less a gulf than that between me and Franco's 'heroes.'

In January I had been on an official mission in Paris. The days I spent there were painful and depressing. Every day I looked forward to the conclusion of my mission, so that I could return to Valencia and resume my place in the people's struggle. At seven o'clock in the evening, as soon as my work was finished, I went straight back to my hotel and went to bed. There was nothing I wanted to do in Paris, and no one I wanted to see. I could not shake off the sufferings of the Spanish people, which haunted me night and day. Home-sickness was almost a physical pain.

Eventually my work there was finished—an adequate description of it would fill a whole book in itself—and

I returned to Valencia, full of the greatest enthusiasm to contribute my small share to the struggle. But alas ! my enthusiasm, which distance had made all the greater, was now converted to disgust.

After my return I more than once reflected what stupid illusions I had been cultivating in Paris, in thinking of the Spanish people only, and forgetting that this was a war between lunatics on the one side and lunatics on the other, with whom I had nothing whatever to do.

After all the efforts I had made during preceding years to keep aloof from the mad and passionate hatreds both of Left and Right, to be at the mercy of individuals and motives so utterly remote from me was too much. I even thought death might be preferable.

Also I unfortunately lacked ambition. I had no taste for epaulets and glory. All I wanted was that Spaniards should cease slaughtering one another. All I wanted was the end of the war. If I were degraded rather than promoted for the sake of this desire, I should not care. Better a sergeant in peace than a general in a fratricidal war.

Michèle was dismissed from the Russian Embassy. The Russians probably disliked her friendship with an officer at the Ministry of War.

At first I did not fully appreciate the significance of this event. I naïvely believed it just meant that she had lost her job, and I could not understand why she was the victim of a panic fear.

But later, when I had to use all my influence to get her out of Spain, I understood. It was a hard task, which I shall never forget.

I had to conduct the negotiations with the chief of the Special Department, a man with whom I had

worked night and day at the militia office in the Calle del Barquillo. It was humiliating to have to ask favours for a woman who was as fervent a pro-Republican as ever. More than once I was interrogated almost as if I had been a suspect myself. When these interrogations, which he obviously carried out by special order, were over, we would have a friendly conversation and smoke a cigarette together. It was on one of these occasions that the conversation turned to the case of Major Gonzalez Muñoz. My friendship with Muñoz dated from our schooldays, and we had been cadets at the Military Academy together. He had been Chief of Staff of the Mangada column.

The officer who interrogated me told me, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, that he himself had given the order for the execution of Major Muñoz, who had been denounced for conspiring with the enemy, a charge which, as far as I could judge, was completely unfounded.

Perhaps I was mistaken, but I thought I saw a gleam in his eyes, saying :

“ I could give orders to have you shot with just as much ease and equanimity.”

On March 19, my saint's day, I again went to Paris, where my presence was once more required. After overcoming many scruples, I left with my mind firmly made up to do all in my power not to return.

I travelled in an Air France machine. At half-past four in the afternoon we crossed the snow-capped Pyrenees. Beyond the Pyrenees we ran into dense fog, which cut off all visibility. Darkness fell while the pilot was still searching for a landing-place. The crew made no secret of our dangerous situation. The pilot finally made up his mind and landed, I don't know how. We came to earth with a nasty bump, but that

was all, and found ourselves in the middle of a wheat field. Peasants hurried towards us, and told us we had landed near Carcassonne.

We went to the nearest road, and had a long time to wait till a car came and picked us up. During the wait I did a stupid and childish thing. I left the waiting group, went up to a tree and kissed it. It was a symbol of France.

I later discovered that I was not the first or the last Spaniard to make that gesture.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Bilbao and Brunete

NOW I am one more of the many Spaniards wandering in exile, shunning other Spaniards and bearing his burden of suffering with him wherever he goes. I am one more of those who, in these days of European disaster, never find one piece of good news when they open their morning paper. I am one more of those who switch off the wireless as soon as they hear a Spanish voice filling the ether with talk of glory and madness. When I hear both sides talking of 'our glorious infantry' I feel like smashing the wireless set.

I cannot describe the sadness I have felt on hearing the daily Spanish transmission over the Italian wireless. The speaker, a Spaniard, and to judge from his accent, undoubtedly a Catalan, talks as if he were throwing hand-grenades.

"Yesterday," he says, for example, "the glorious Spanish infantry continued its advance to crush the Asiatic hordes of Barcelona and exterminate the whole Marxist *canaille* like mad dogs. Not a single one of them will remain alive."

I am one more of those Spaniards who, if they come across other Spaniards, used to a different style of life, eating hungrily in some cheap Paris restaurant, religiously shun them. Are they pro-rebel or pro-Republican? one wonders. But soon the voice of common blood makes us talk, and opens the way to

mutual understanding. Some are rebels who have fled from the Republican camp, others are Republicans who have fled from the priests and the Falangists. But, after a few words, what a relief it is to find that they are human beings like oneself, that away from Spain they regard the struggle as barbarous, and the motives proclaimed by both sides as entirely inadequate to justify the bloodshed which is ruining the Peninsula !

Preoccupied by my own personal problem, I wrote to a close friend of mine, a native of Valladolid, who had been jailed for two months in his native town, expecting the executioners to come for him every night. But he had managed to get away and was now living in Switzerland. I told him I believed the reason for most personal tragedies to be people's incapacity to analyse their own feelings, and I asked his permission to make him a confession, so that he might help me to know myself. I explained that I often thought of myself as a vulgar deserter, who had fled from the war, giving in to the instinct of self-preservation ; but that at other times I thought it an honour to have deserted from a fratricidal war in which so many prisoners were killed, particularly on Franco's side. Sometimes, I told him, when Frenchmen had asked me what I was doing in France, I had replied : " I have the honour to be a deserter from the Spanish civil war." But that reply did not leave my conscience clear.

My friend answered me by return of post.

' I do not know whether it is because my case is similar to yours,' he replied, ' but I certainly give my unqualified approval to your decision not to return to Valencia. I believe that our duty as Spaniards outweighs all military obligations, and that only those are

fulfilling their duty who keep aloof from the fratricidal struggle, and contemplate with horror the blood-bath into which our country has been plunged by the ambitions of some and the mistakes of others, which have brought it to the brink of destruction. I am increasingly pessimistic about the duration and the outcome of the struggle. If the world understood the Spanish problem and cared in the least for Spain, it would rise unanimously against this absurd war, which is destroying all that is best in our country. In my opinion a compromise is the only possible way out. Spain must be given a Government composed of persons having no direct contact with either camp, a Government which will be able to impose its authority, not to leave unpunished the crimes which have been committed, but to find a harmonious and peaceful *modus vivendi*. Any other solution will solve nothing. For a short time one side may temporarily triumph and maintain itself by terror, but that will solve nothing. On the contrary, it will widen the abyss between the two sides, hatred will be intensified, and people will only wait, first for the moment of individual vengeance, and then for the inevitable explosion of collective vengeance.

Alas for the tragic destiny of our poor country ! The Government represents her as a fair matron, striking capitalists, priests, and Fascists to the dust. The rebels depict her with an imperial crown, destroying the hammer and sickle. But I see her hungry, care-worn, and at the brink of death, horrified by the innumerable crimes committed in her name, and weary of the senseless struggle between her sons.'

In March 1937, the rebel army in the North prepared to strike a decisive blow at the territory in that

area which remained loyal to the Republic. It was a strong and well-equipped army, heavily outnumbering the Republican forces, and with a far greater weight of war material behind it. Four Italian divisions, reorganised and reinforced after the rout of Guadalajara, formed part of it. These were the divisions of March 23, Fiamme Nere, Littorio, and May 9. The army had an impressive display of aeroplanes and artillery, all of it brought from abroad. The plan of campaign had been drawn up by Solchaga and Mola, under the supervision of the German and the Italian General Staffs.

All the Basques had to defend themselves with was battalions armed with rifles and machine-guns, and a line of defences called the 'Iron Ring.' They had no field artillery, no anti-aircraft guns, no fighter aeroplanes and, last but not least, no provisions. But they had what Spaniards always have : courage.

The rebels took Bilbao after three months' sanguinary fighting.

The destruction of Durango and Guernica, the shootings of Basque priests, etc., are too horrible to mention.

In these battles the attack proved stronger than the defence, and they therefore deserve a little more attention.

The Basque defence was a passive defence, owing to the fact that nothing can be improvised. The famous Iron Ring, despite the lavish expenditure of labour and material upon it, was in many respects an ingenuous piece of work, and therefore lacked any serious capacity for resistance. Bilbao is in a plain dominated by commanding heights. The line of trenches, instead of being dug on the townward side of the slopes, was dug on the slopes beyond, and was consequently easily dominated by the enemy as soon as he was in command of the higher ridges beyond. Trenches on the nearer side of a crest are only effective

if you are provided with first-rate artillery able to cover not only the crests themselves, but the slopes beyond, and thus enable you to prevent the enemy infantry from advancing. But the Republican artillery was weak, short of ammunition, and poorly trained.

An entirely passive defence, which shows no initiative but merely replies to moves made by the enemy, is bound to collapse in the end. In this case the result was accelerated by the intervention of an enormous air force, which spread havoc and terror, by the participation of the rebel fleet, the rebel preponderance in artillery and tanks and, last but not least, by simple starvation.

Why was the North unprovided with food, aircraft, and anti-aircraft guns? There were many reasons, which it would take many pages to explain. Let us take the case of food as an example.

For eight months the harbours of the North had been open to trade. Ships were able to leave and enter with relative ease. The only problem in provisioning these regions was the necessity to pay in gold, of which the Valencia Government had an ample supply.

A Basque who fought in Bilbao up to the last moment told me that the lack of provisions was simply due to the stupidity of those in control of the Republican Government. The latter, he said, took no interest in the North, and failed to see that the mountainous districts of Asturias, Santander, and Bilbao compelled the enemy to keep a strong army there which, consequently, could not be turned against Madrid, and moreover that the conquests of these provinces would put the Fascists in possession of industries which were lacking in Castile.

My reply was that the Ministers had not been so stupid as not to see these things, to which I myself had repeatedly drawn their attention. The reason why

nothing had been done was that the leader of the Government was not a big enough man for the job.

During the course of the enemy's victorious advance upon Bilbao, grave political events, provoked by the Anarchists, took place in the Government zone. At Perthuis and Puigcerda, on the French frontier, the Assault Guards, by order of the Valencia Government, had to fight sanguinary battles with the Anarchists, who wanted no other forces but their own on the frontier. At Vilanesa they had established Libertarian Communism, and loyal forces had only been able to restore order after heavy fighting. On May 3 the Barcelona police tried to seize the Central Telephone Building, which was in Anarchist hands. The Anarchist districts of Barcelona rose, barricades were constructed, and there were three days of bloodshed in the streets. The Government, to its disgrace, was not able to deal with the Anarchists.

On May 16 Caballero presented his resignation to the President, after the Communist Ministers, whose demand for energetic action to re-establish order in Catalonia had not been fulfilled, had presented theirs. The crisis had been latent for several days, ever since Alvarez del Vayo had returned from France and told the Cabinet that the incidents at Barcelona and the activities of the Anarchists in the rest of Catalonia had created a very bad impression among the friends of the Government abroad. Azafia once more entrusted Caballero with the task of forming a Government, but he failed, and on May 18 a Government was formed by Señor Negrin, with Don Indalecio Prieto as Minister of National Defence (the three arms were included under the one portfolio). All the political parties that belonged to the Popular Front were represented in this Government, but not the trade unions,

neither the UGT (Caballero) nor the CNT (Anarcho-Syndicalists).

This Government, on account of its moderation, was well received by the foreign friends of the Republic, and even better received by the Spanish people, with the exception of the Anarchists, whose Press spoke of the formation of a counter-revolutionary Government.

The first act of the Negrin Government was to purge Barcelona of undesirables and restore order there. Hundreds of Anarchists and Trotskyists were arrested, not always, unfortunately, by the Government police, but often by the private police of the Communist Party. Andres Nin, the leader of the POUM, was arrested, and nothing has since been heard of him, as well as of many other prisoners. . . .

Prieto's ability and talents soon made themselves felt. They were revealed in the daily improvement of the army, as was proved in the Battle of Brunete, which took place on Republican initiative.

The Negrin Government was gravely alarmed by the rebel advance in the Basque country, the strong pressure upon Santander, and the danger to Asturias. They hoped to relieve the pressure upon the North by a big battle in the heart of Spain, near Madrid.

The planning of the battle was masterly. The objective was a break-through at Villanueva del Pardillo and an advance in the direction of Navalcarnero, with the road running through Valdemorillo, Villanueva de la Cañada, Brunete, Sevilla la Nueva, and Navalcarnero as the axis of the movement. Had the Republicans reached Navalcarnero, the line of retreat of the whole rebel army would have been cut off, and it would have been surrounded in the basin of the Manzanares, where, with its two flanks resting on the

Tagus and Robledo de Chavela, it was threatening Madrid. Also the fighting line would have been pushed back to eighteen miles' distance from Madrid.

On July 5 the Republican army, supported by some tanks, attacked the enemy positions on the Cuesta de la Reina. They reached the enemy trenches and retired, leaving some tanks behind. This attack was a feint, intended to make the enemy believe that the real attack was to be delivered in that region.

The enemy lines were broken in an original manner during the night of July 5-6. There was no preliminary air bombing or artillery bombardment, and no mass attack took place. The way it was carried out demonstrated the high discipline attained by the Republican army. A whole Republican division, man by man, penetrated the rebel lines and reached a wood to the north of Brunete. At dawn they seized Brunete without firing a shot. The enemy was taken by surprise and had no choice but to surrender.

The Republican army, supported by eighty bombers, which, thanks to their superior quality, had the mastery of the air, then opened the general battle. Another division attacked Villanueva de la Cañada, but the defenders hung on desperately and this attack failed. Rebel reinforcements poured in from all sides. On May 8 the Republicans attacked again with new forces, attempting to cross the River Guadarrama and to advance on Boadilla. On the 9th they took Quijorna, and on the 10th Villafranca de Castillo. This was the most bloodthirsty battle that had yet been fought.

On the 12th the front was stabilised again. The Republican advance was stopped. The enemy had brought his best troops and his abundant war material into action, and this time the advantage of the defensive worked in favour of the rebels.

As soon as the Republicans had been brought to a standstill, the rebel command, having all its forces

concentrated before Madrid and imagining the Republicans to have been disorganised by their offensive, launched a violent counter-attack. This prolonged the Battle of Brunete till the end of July, at which date the Republican position was only a little more favourable than it had been before the battle began. Brunete itself was recaptured by the rebels, but at tremendous cost.

Both armies had suffered heavily, to a degree hitherto unknown in this war, and both described the Battle of Brunete as 'glorious.'

The Battle of Brunete gave the Republican army in the North a month's respite for reorganising and entrenching, but owing to the almost complete blockade it was impossible to supply them with artillery, aeroplanes or food.

A fortnight after the end of the Battle of Brunete, the rebels opened their offensive against Santander, according to a plan devised by the Italian General Staff, and with the help of abundant Italian forces, amply provided with first-class war material. It must be admitted that the plan of campaign could stand comparison with the best historical models. Eleven days later the Italians entered Santander. The usual executions followed.

I had come into close contact with the people of Asturias during my stay there, and I therefore followed their final struggle against the 'saviours of Spain' with the deepest emotion.

Their last stand reminded me of Alfred de Vigny's poem: 'The Death of the Wolf.' In this poem de Vigny describes a wolf-hunt, in which a wolf is

finally separated from the pack. Knowing all is lost, it seizes a dog by the throat and kills him. Then, as the huntsmen raise their rifles, the wolf, *refermant ses grands yeux, meurt sans jeter un cri*. The Asturians, like de Vigny's wolf, knew how to die.

After the whole northern zone had fallen into Franco's hand, some months of quiet followed. The whole world waited for the great offensive which Franco was planning. I often heard Queipo de Llano talking about it with relish over the wireless.

"No, my dear Reds, don't imagine we shall leave you in peace," he would say. "This time we shall deliver the final blow. I can't tell you where we shall strike. That's the affair of the Generalissimo, and nobody else knows. I can't tell you whether I shall go to Saragossa to watch you running into the sea, or whether we shall attack in Andalusia or Madrid. But I should not sleep in peace if I were you !"

Another time I heard him say :

"Reds ! The great offensive has been postponed on account of the weather. It is raining and snowing, and we are not in a hurry. But believe me, you have no cause for reassurance !"

In the middle of December 1937, the Republicans, under the command of Saravia, whom Prieto had promoted to the rank of general, carried out a brilliant and audacious attack on Teruel. The defenders, after some days of fighting, were forced to surrender. The capture of Teruel upset all the 'Generalissimo's' plans.

The rebels, possessing an overwhelming advantage in war material of all kinds, decided that Teruel must be retaken at all costs. A sanguinary battle ensued, which ended two months later with the recapture of the town by the rebels. The losses on

both sides were very high, but on the rebel side they were far higher.

During the two months that the Battle of Teruel lasted, the rebels persistently denied that the Republicans had ever taken it. They only admitted it by their triumphant announcement of its recapture by the Nationalist troops, 'saviours of Spain.'

Up to the end of March 1938, more than ten thousand children had been killed and more than fifteen thousand wounded by bombing of open towns. The figures are as follows :

	<i>Dead</i>	<i>Wounded</i>
Madrid . . .	879	1,380
Barcelona . . .	598	1,010
Valencia . . .	329	416
Asturias . . .	1,214	2,000
Basque provinces . .	684	1,165
Province of Madrid and Guadalajara .	879	2,649
Ciudad Réal, Cuenca, Albacete . . .	2,011	1,974
Catalonia (excluding Barcelona) . .	1,647	2,472

These figures have been put into the shade since then by the terrible bombardments aimed at terrorising the civil population during the rebel offensive towards the Mediterranean.

Why is Franco, with the enormous advantages he has over his enemy, taking such a long time to win the war ?

Many months before the triumph of the Popular

Front, while the reactionary Government was still in power, Franco, as chief of the General Staff, saw to it that arms were withdrawn from Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia, where he distrusted the people. The greater part of the best material went to the Artillery Parks of Valladolid, Saragossa, and elsewhere. One piece of evidence of the preconceived nature of the plan was the sixty thousand rifle-bolts from the Madrid Artillery Park which were transferred to the Montaña Barracks. As he could count on the Moroccan army—shock troops comparable with any soldiers in the world—he expected a short war and an easy one.

He had all the elements of victory except one. He had war material, shock troops seasoned in the Moroccan War, Falangists, support from abroad, everything. All he lacked was the support of the Spanish people.

EPILOGUE

‘ A little peace is a precious thing.’

—Old Spanish proverb.

THE Spanish civil war is a sanguinary bull-fight, a bull-fight from which all the art and skill and elegance have been removed and only the cruelty and barbarism remain. Spain is the bull-ring, and the bulls and the horses are, alas ! Spanish ; but most of the *toreros* are foreigners, and the spectators are the whole world.

Blasco Ibañez said that the real wild beast at the bull-fight is not the poor bull, but the crowd of frivolous and cruel spectators.

If the history of Spain had been properly taught at the Military Academies by competent instructors, the officers would not bear the terrible responsibility before history which is theirs to-day. But their instructors were bad and the history they learned was worse. They learned a history of triumphant wars, in which our infantry scoured the world without meeting its match, a history of unrivalled glory and renown, a history by which nobody could fail to be stirred to admiration. But they learned nothing about our disasters, and were told nothing of how the creative and warlike virtues of the Spanish race were

dissipated and wasted by the Spanish State. The disgraceful pages of our history remain closed to them, and they know nothing of the national misfortunes which the people bore with stoical contempt.

Their teaching justified them in their hatred of France and England, whom they regard as alone responsible for the decline of Spain. They cannot see that France was only defending herself against the House of Austria, and that our downfall was the inevitable result of our wars against all the nations of the world. They cannot see that the root of the evil lay in the country's deflection from its destiny when the throne was abandoned to a foreign Prince, and the will of Isabella the Catholic, daughter of the Spanish people, was not carried out.

Those who have not received the pernicious instruction of our Military Academies learn to face things as they are, because experience teaches them ; and they, moreover, have to foot the bill. Sometimes they despise the motives of the protagonists in important events, sometimes they admire them, but they always have to put up with them. They know only too well that if Germany and Italy send arms and men to Franco, they do so to get something in return.

The tirades against Marxism on the Fascist wireless make them smile. They know that these are not idealist, Quixotic gestures on Hitler's and Mussolini's part, and that German and Italian money is not being spent on Franco for charitable purposes. At the front the militiamen sing :

*Si Alemania e Italia ayudan a Franco
Por algo será . . . por algo será.¹*

But for the civil war, the voice of Spain would carry weight at the present juncture of international affairs,

¹ ' If Germany and Italy help Franco, it is for something, it is for something.'

and would no longer be ignored as it has been for the last two hundred years. International politics are as unromantic as horse-trading, and the strategic position of the Peninsula, with the Balearics, the Straits of Gibraltar, and Spanish Morocco, would give Spain the position in world diplomacy which is her due. This consideration is a glaring exposure of the false patriotism of the generals and the reactionaries.

Why did they unleash so many disasters? I shall leave the answer to Antonio Machado, the poet.

'All Spain is sold to foreign avarice,' he wrote, 'the soil, the sky, and the sub-soil. All has been sold to the foreigner by the tragic frivolity of the reactionaries.

'The price of a great betrayal, however, is usually very small in comparison with the risks involved in its execution and the terrible evils that come in its wake, and its motives are generally just as petty and mean, and they are always unclean and shameful.

'If you asked me why, apart from the thirty pieces of silver, Judas betrayed Christ, I confess I should be at a loss for an answer.

'I have searched the four Gospels for some explanation, but I could not find it. But the most probable hypothesis is that of the twelve apostles Judas was the only fool. The tragical foolishness of Judas reappears in the psychological analysis of all great betrayals. Do you ask why the rebel officers now turn against the people the arms the latter gave them for the defence of the State? Do you ask why they open the ports and frontiers of Spain to the imperialist ambitions of foreign Powers? My answer is this: In the first place they want the thirty pieces of silver; in other words, the slender advantages they will derive in the event of a complete victory of German and Italian arms on Spanish soil; in the second place they are motivated by a spirit of frivolous resentment,

worthy of Judas himself, which never considers the consequences of its actions.'

The bull is the typical Spanish animal. In its blind rage it will not hesitate to attack an express train, for rage utterly eclipses its instincts of self-preservation. In the bull-ring it will sometimes pursue a *torero* and have him at his mercy, only to be deflected from his helpless prey to dash headlong at a red rag, flicked in his eyes by another *torero*. How blind is the rage of the Spanish bull! And how typically Spanish!

The rebel generals who let loose the civil war are just like that. It was enough for them to catch a distant sight of the red rag of Communism for them to start a headlong career of bloodshed and ruin.

The Spaniard is, above all, a spectator. His great delight is to observe from a comfortable seat the always dramatic and never pleasing spectacle of life taking place all round him. He does not like action. Sometimes, carried away by a sudden fit of passion, he will want to do great things, but his real pleasure, true Arab that he is, is not action, but contemplation. He likes others to go down into the ring while he watches the bulls from the gallery and cheers or hisses the *toreros*. Sometimes he feels compelled to leave his comfortable seat and take part in the show. But he does so reluctantly and under protest, and reserves his right to be a spectator and to applaud or hiss according to the way things go in the arena.

Though this stupid and criminal civil war has directly affected the life of every single Spaniard, nevertheless they have not abandoned their attitude as spec-

tators, spectators of a tremendous drama unrolling before their eyes ; and sooner or later they will distribute their cheers and hisses. After looking on for seven years at the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, in 1931 they applauded the Republic. After two years of the Radical-CEDA coalition, with its shootings, cruelties, and persecutions, in February 1936, they applauded the Popular Front.

But if Franco wins he will not be applauded. The Spaniards, like good spectators, will say that his win doesn't count, that the result was 'cooked,' and that he didn't play fair. For by the intervention of Germany and Italy the Republic was robbed of its legitimate victory.

What do the different classes of Spaniards feel about the war ?

They may be divided into four groups :

- (a) the *Arriba España!* and *Viva Franco!* fanatics ;
- (b) the fanatics for social revolution ;
- (c) the majority in Franco territory ; and finally
- (d) the majority in Government territory.

Nearly all those in the first group, the ardent ones, those with some sort of ideal, have been killed in battle. That leaves the officers who occupy the high positions in the army, those who were promoted during the Moroccan War for distinguished service in the field. These men are tied to the rising body and soul, because unless they win they will die as beggars, useless as they are for any kind of work. For the time being they are as happy as children. In the old days nearly all Spanish war material was bought second-hand ; and, there being plenty of graft, you never quite knew that you could rely on it. This had been going on for a century. But now they have a

real, modern army, complete with guns, machine-guns, aeroplanes, and real tanks at their command. No wonder they are overjoyed. There remain also a certain number of fanatical Carlists and other reactionaries who would rather see Spain perish than consent to a Republican victory. Among them are some who helped to promote the civil war for the sake of preserving their property intact, but they have now lost everything, for the *Arriba España!* movement has ruined Spain and all Spaniards. There are no rich men left in Spain. There is not a single outstanding personality in the whole of this first group. Nevertheless, by means of terrorism and with the help of German and Italian *matériel* and personnel, it succeeds in holding down the whole of the rebel zone. The fanaticism and insatiable hatred of these people causes them to shoot down Marxists, Republicans, children, old men, and women—all who stand in their path. The continual checks they have suffered have only served to intensify their rage.

Those belonging to the second group, the fanatical Left Wingers, have been decimated, too. The most ardent of them have perished on the battle-field, and the general atmosphere is so hostile to them that the survivors have grown as meek as lambs. The ranks of the Communist Party have been swelled by thousands of Spaniards who are no more Communists than I am, but have been impressed by its model discipline and loyalty to the Republic. To talk to these people of the social revolution is like mentioning rope in the house of a man who has been hanged. The Anarchists and Caballero's revolutionary Socialists are discredited and have fallen into general contempt.

Those in the third and fourth groups are one and the same class of people. It was a matter of chance whether they happened to be in Seville or Valencia at the outbreak of the insurrection. They constitute the bulk of the Spanish people. Their outlook has been

no more changed by the war than it was by four hundred years of Habsburg and Bourbon despotism. Their chief characteristic is a profound humanity, as it has always been.

For four hundred years the governors of Spain (so inferior to the people of Spain) made the Spanish State their plaything. The Republic at last seemed to hold out a hope that the State and people might be identified. That is why the people in Republican territory suffer and die for their Republic.

The majority in the Franco zone live in terror, because each day exceeds the last in ferocity. Fugitives from the Franco zone always tell the same story ; namely, that the Carlists and Falangists have killed everyone ' who wore a tie,' i.e. who owned a library and had any intellectual preoccupations or ambitions. Terrorism keeps the people there submissive and demoralised. They, their sons, their relatives, their friends, are forced to die fighting against fellow-Spaniards, and still there is no end of the war. Their dearest wish is to stop the spilling of Spanish blood.

I have asked fugitives from the rebel camp : " And what do the villagers of Castile, Andalusia, and Estremadura think of the war, the peasants who are illiterate like Sancho Panza but wise with Sancho's homely wisdom ? "

" They are in mourning," was the answer. " They have all lost sons or brothers at the front, and one can read on their sad faces : We were poor and we were wretched, but what seemed impossible has happened, and now we are poorer and even more wretched."

" What do they say about Franco ? "

" They say : ' What is Franco to us ? He is a general of the Army of Morocco, which has forty years of graft and ignominious defeats at the hands of a handful of Moors to its discredit. What is Franco to us ? ' "

And I asked again : " And what of the village

priests, with their patched, threadbare garments, who live among the people in the love of Christ and of their flock ? ”

“ They have all aged,” was the answer, “ and in their prayers they ask God to forgive the generals and bishops who started this ghastly war.”

Among the population of the Franco zone the desire that the war should end is so strong that sometimes, when it seemed that he was getting the upper hand, it has actually worked in his favour.

Nevertheless the war continues without end. They see Germans, Italians, and Moors, and they see enormous quantities of war material sent from Germany and Italy to kill their fellow-Spaniards ; and yet the rebels fail to rout the Republicans and end the war. They conclude that without the Germans and Italians the war would be already ended. This fact is deeply imprinted upon all Spanish minds, both in the Franco and the Republican zones ; and they all know that thousands of Spanish children have been killed by bombs dropped from German and Italian aeroplanes.

Balzac, in *La Rabouilleuse*, tells the story of a group of young people, known as *les Chevaliers de la Désœuvrance*, who played a joke on a Spaniard living in the town of Issoudun. He used to leave his cart overnight in the town square. One night they took it to pieces and carried it in sections to the top of a tower, where they put it together again. Next morning, when the people saw the cart on top of the tower, they thought it was bewitched, or that the Devil had been at work. When the Spaniard turned up people thronged round him, and some of the young men said : “ Your cart is bewitched. Tell us, where do you come from ? ” “ I come from a country where we never forgive an insult,” the Spaniard replied. Meanwhile another group of young men pushed the cart from the top of the tower and it crashed to pieces in the roadway.

Franco may gain a temporary victory, or the Republic a permanent one, but the people of Spain, whether Red or White, Catholic or unbelievers, wise or foolish, will never forgive the Germans and Italians and their accomplices.

It was not after the capture of Merida by the rebels or after the disgraceful butchery at Badajoz, or even after the fall of Toledo and Malaga, that the people of Spain, in my opinion, felt most outraged ; they were even more afflicted at the cruel *paseos*, or gang murders, that took place in the Republican camp. It was not only the necessities of war, but the desire to put an end to these unpunished crimes that put the masses in the Republican camp resolutely behind the legal Government.

At meetings of Republicans, Communists or Socialists, we officers used to be asked for the news of the day. "Not bad," we would perhaps reply. "Four hundred enemy dead were left on the field." But no one ever expressed a word of satisfaction, because we could not forget that those, though our enemies, were Spanish dead.

Nevertheless the Republicans, in spite of their hatred of war, are obliged to wage it, and they wage it with tenacity and heroism. They are inspired by the belief that so many victims and so much disaster will forge a new Spain with more justice and humanity.

Just as the two Spains were divided at the funerals of Lieutenant Castillo and Calvo Sotelo before the outbreak, so are the two Europes divided to-day. On the one side are the democratic and on the other the Fascist Powers.

The democracies are intrinsically stronger than the dictatorships. But they are weakened by their pre-occupation for the values of civilisation, which would perish if they attempted to follow the example of their Fascist rivals. The democracies try honourably, with infinite patience, to settle the problems which threaten the peace of Europe. Moreover, they know that the Fascist Powers, on account of their mad armament race, are at the brink of economic ruin.

The Fascist nations, aware of their inferiority in intrinsic strength, try to make up for it by audacity, provocation, and threats, and thus obtain advantages similar to those which a footpad may enjoy over a peaceable citizen. Thus they get the better of the democratic nations, and they have won their successes in the first place at the expense of Spain, which every day is more completely abandoned to the wild beasts in the arena.

One of the great advantages of a democratic régime is that it is difficult for democratic leaders to commit atrocities of the sort so typical of Fascist governments. But a great disadvantage of a democratic régime is that its leaders' hands are tied in times of emergency, prohibiting them from acting as decisively and intelligently as, it must be admitted, the Fascist leaders act. Moreover, in a democracy there are many people willing and anxious to hand over the keys of the fortress to the Fascist enemy.

But Spain, abandoned by the European democracies to the rapacious appetites of Germany and Italy, might have been saved by the United States. It would have been sufficient for the latter not to have extended the operation of the Neutrality Act to the Spanish civil war. But that great democracy failed, too, to act wisely in the face of the Spanish problem, and its failure may have repercussions at her own expense. A Franco victory would have serious consequences in Latin America. With a generalissimo at

the helm of each of the Latin Republics, imitating the mother country and involving a political retrogression of a century, Germany and Italy would establish themselves on the American continent, and enmity for the United States would be the dominating sentiment.

Terrorism reigns in the zone 'liberated' by Franco, terrorism raised to a degree for which history offers us no precedents. Queipo de Llano has publicly proclaimed his 'movement's' purpose. "More than half of the population," he has declared, "must be wiped out."

Supposing it were possible to kill off half the population of Spain, it would be comparatively easy to dominate the rest. Nationalist terrorism is the result of fear ; in the first place fear of anybody capable of thinking for himself, or whom the Nationalists suspect of the crime of wishing to think for himself. The greatest single group of victims of the rebel terror consists of those suspected of thinking. They are sentenced 'as lukewarm or indifferent towards the movement for the salvation of Spain.'

It is common knowledge that every scholar, writer, artist, engineer, architect, lawyer, etc., of any talent belonged, if not to the Left, at any rate to the Liberals. Those who had the misfortune to be in Franco's territory at the outbreak of the insurrection are to-day either dead or in gaol, and their families are destitute. The reason for crushing them was the fear that their intelligence inspired. Those who had never taken any part in politics were at first allowed a little liberty, but they have all long since fallen before a firing-squad. A denunciation by some colleague was sufficient to cause them to be shot ; some colleague who, though a 'liberator of Spain,' had

never built a house though he was an architect, or had never had a patient though he was a doctor.

A Liberal régime is imperfect, too, but at least it allows relative freedom for the development of individual intelligence. That is why it is the bugbear of the generals and the priests of Spain, and of all the failures in every walk of life.

That crazy and doting old maniac, General Millan Astray, has expressed this feeling well.

"Gentlemen of the Legion!" he has more than once declared, addressing his troops. "Model soldiers! Model reactionaries! Down with intelligence!"

For the rebels terrorism was an absolute necessity. The reason it has gone to such extremes is the general aversion felt for the 'liberators.' They are now in their third 'year of triumph,' and are prepared, if necessary, to go on for a hundred years, until all the 'bad' and the 'impious' are wiped out.

On the Republican side there has been no need for terror. I have heard objections made to important tasks being entrusted to monarchists or reactionaries in war-time, but usually the answer was: "Never mind, he is an honest man, and he is as much opposed to the instigators of the war as we are." True, there have been assassinations and 'bumpings-off' in Republican territory. But in the eyes of the Government and of the people the authors of these crimes are ordinary criminals.

But in the Franco camp the assassins and murderers are held in high esteem. They, the Carlists and the young gentlemen of the Falange, are loyal Christians with a strong sense of discipline. In other words, they always carry out the orders of the superior officer in charge of the 'purge' in each town or village. Often the officer is a German or Italian 'expert,' but he is always held in high honour among the local dignitaries, and on public occasions he takes his place at the right hand of His Grace the Arch-

bishop or Bishop, or whoever the senior ecclesiastical representative may happen to be.

Few Spanish families but mourn several of their members as a result of the war. As the rising took place in July, during the holiday season, many members of the same family were caught on opposite sides and have suffered losses on both. Also there are families whose Liberal members have been forced to fight in Franco's ranks and whose reactionary members have been forced to fight for the Republic. I have often heard conversations like this :

"How is your brother?"

"I have no idea what has become of him. He was in Burgos, or Valladolid, or Corunna. Unless they have shot him, I expect he's in Franco's army."

The third 'triumphal year' starts with a casualty list of one and a half million dead, and with all Spain ruined as a result of the 'totalitarian' application of a 'realist' policy. The Republic is blockaded by land and sea, and has no prospects except to follow the example of Numantia and let herself be destroyed bit by bit by the army of the 'liberators.' And if the Republic, and with it all the moral values for which she stands, is destroyed, the 'realists,' who imagine that their victory will settle everything and that all their crimes will be forgotten, will be up against reality for the first time.

To kill one and a half million Spaniards and ruin Spain has been no easy task. It has been carried on by criminals, aided and abetted by criminal accomplices, without whose support it would have been impossible. Those one and a half millions are buried, but it will be a much more difficult task to lay them to rest.

Franco can never do so, but with the aid of Italian

and German aeroplanes and troops, and if the madness spreads from Spain and flares up into a European conflagration, he can keep them dormant. During the past two years Germany and Italy, having only one foot in the Peninsula, have gained so much by their blackmailing tactics at the expense of France and England that should they succeed in establishing themselves there thoroughly their appetite would be insatiable. The only other possible alternative, and it is an incredible one, is that Franco should reduce all surviving Spaniards to the state of imbeciles and eunuchs.

That is precisely what the 'realists' would like to do, but they are not likely to succeed. If they did, it would be a sad day for them. For the complete atrophy of the Spanish people would leave Spain an easy prey to the ambitions of all her neighbours.

A dictatorship of Franco in Spain would be very different from the dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini. The latter succeeded in creating popular movements which swept them into power, but the case of Franco is quite different. Franco can never obliterate the memory of those one and a half million dead, and if he triumphs his backers will have been exclusively that class of Spaniard which for three centuries was responsible for the appalling misgovernment of Spain. Therefore his triumph can only be an episode. He may retain power for some time, as long as he has enough arms at his disposal. With enough picked troops to wreak his will, he may exert a mediæval despotism for some time. But neither the arms nor the picked troops are really his, for they come from abroad, and Spanish hatred of them grows greater every day. There will come a day when they will be thrown out of Spain.

One of the characteristics of the civil war is propaganda. Every trench contains not only machine-guns, but a loud-speaker. "Hullo! Reds, stop shooting! Comrade so-and-so is going to talk to you," or "Fascists, stop that machine-gun! Comrade such-and-such is going to talk to you." Franco's soldiers listen in surprise to the Fascist loud-speaker, because they know the truth, and the Republican troops have long since grown bored with the propaganda of their own side. As conscription is in force on both sides, there are many Republicans with the rebel troops, and a considerable number of reactionaries in the Republican army. The tide of indifference to propaganda is growing.

Modern killing devices easily extinguish any sign of revolt. Thus the months pass without the soldiers of both sides joining hands to exterminate the extremists of both camps. But that would be the only real way of saving Spain. Two years in the trenches, listening to the crackle of machine-guns, have changed the feelings of the soldiers. Hatred of the 'enemy' disappears, sometimes to be transformed into respect or even admiration, and is replaced by hatred of those who sent them to the slaughter, using shallow words and keeping out of the slaughter themselves. If the reader does not understand, let him ask any ex-service man for an explanation.

When the war ends, for end it must, the Spanish ex-service men will ask why they were sent out to kill one another, and the vividness of their reply will come as a surprise to many people.

To the reader who has followed me through so many pages lacking in literary airs and graces I wish now to make a confession. I am firmly convinced that Spain can look forward to a brilliant future.

A country's future depends on its people and its geographical position.

I am incapable in words of rendering the Spanish people their due. Besides, it has been done in thousands of books already.

I have had the opportunity of meeting many foreigners with a profound knowledge of Spain and Spanish, and I have always been astonished at the greatness of their love for our country.

"You are more royalist than the king," I have always told them. "You are more devoted to Spain than the Spaniards are."

"That is because I know the Spaniards better than they know themselves," they always replied.

Among them were Germans and Americans who had devoted years of research to the epic achievements in America of the Spanish race (not the Spanish state); achievements which, if I am to believe their judgment, are unique in history. Few mistakes have been so grave and so unjust, these people contend, as that made by the French Encyclopædists when they condemned Spain because of their resentment against Catholicism and the aristocratic race which for two centuries exercised a moral and military domination over Europe. After the researches of modern scholars into the Spanish-American epic, nobody with any pretence to a spark of education will dare to repeat the slanders of the Encyclopædists. It is not surprising that those who have studied its achievements are such warm admirers of the Spanish race.

Spanish is spoken in twenty countries, and each one of them is as Spanish as the mother-country. Many of them are rich and prosperous, and all can look forward to the future with pride. But their greatest pride is to be the daughters of Spain.

To have twenty sister nations is an excellent passport into the future. But there is more. We Spaniards are not exclusively European. We are linked to the

Moors by ties of blood, we are related to an Afro-Asiatic cultural community which gains in importance from day to day. Three hundred million men dream of a Cordova which will again be their university, and of a Granada which will again be their European Mecca.

Spain's geography differs from that of the rest of Europe. Mountains intersect its arid soil, which is frozen in winter, parched by the torrid sun in summer. Wheat is its primary produce, but only in exceptional years does it yield any but a scanty crop. Therefore Spain is poor. Hunger and poverty have always been widespread. That Spaniards should have ruled the world while at home they were a nation of beggars is a paradox explicable only in terms of the Spanish national character.

But thanks to technical progress, I have seen practically all crops doubled in recent years. Had we spent our money and our energy on irrigation, on the rationalisation of agriculture, instead of on killing one another, our crops to-day might be five times what they were in 1900, and we might have done something to lift Spain from the trough of her age-long poverty.

With modern technical knowledge the irrigation of the soil of Spain and the rationalisation of her agriculture present no serious problem. Our wonderful Spanish sun could be transformed from a curse into a blessing.

Moreover, we have always enjoyed a privileged geographical position, and to-day it is a stronger asset than ever before. Spain is Europe's bridge-head to Africa, a continent of unlimited possibilities.

Spain's future may, therefore, be brighter than that of any other European country.

PARIS, 28 June 1938.